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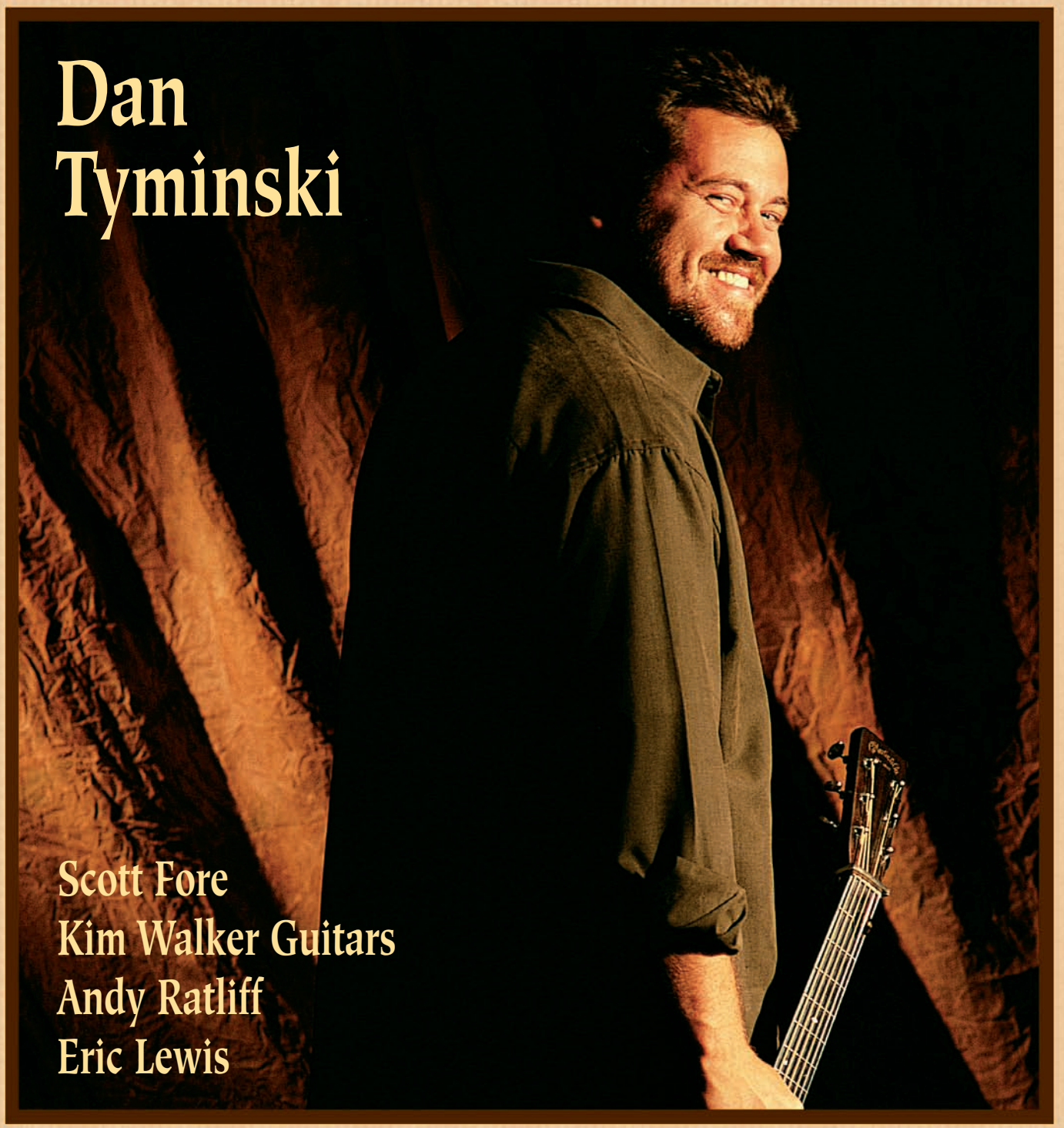
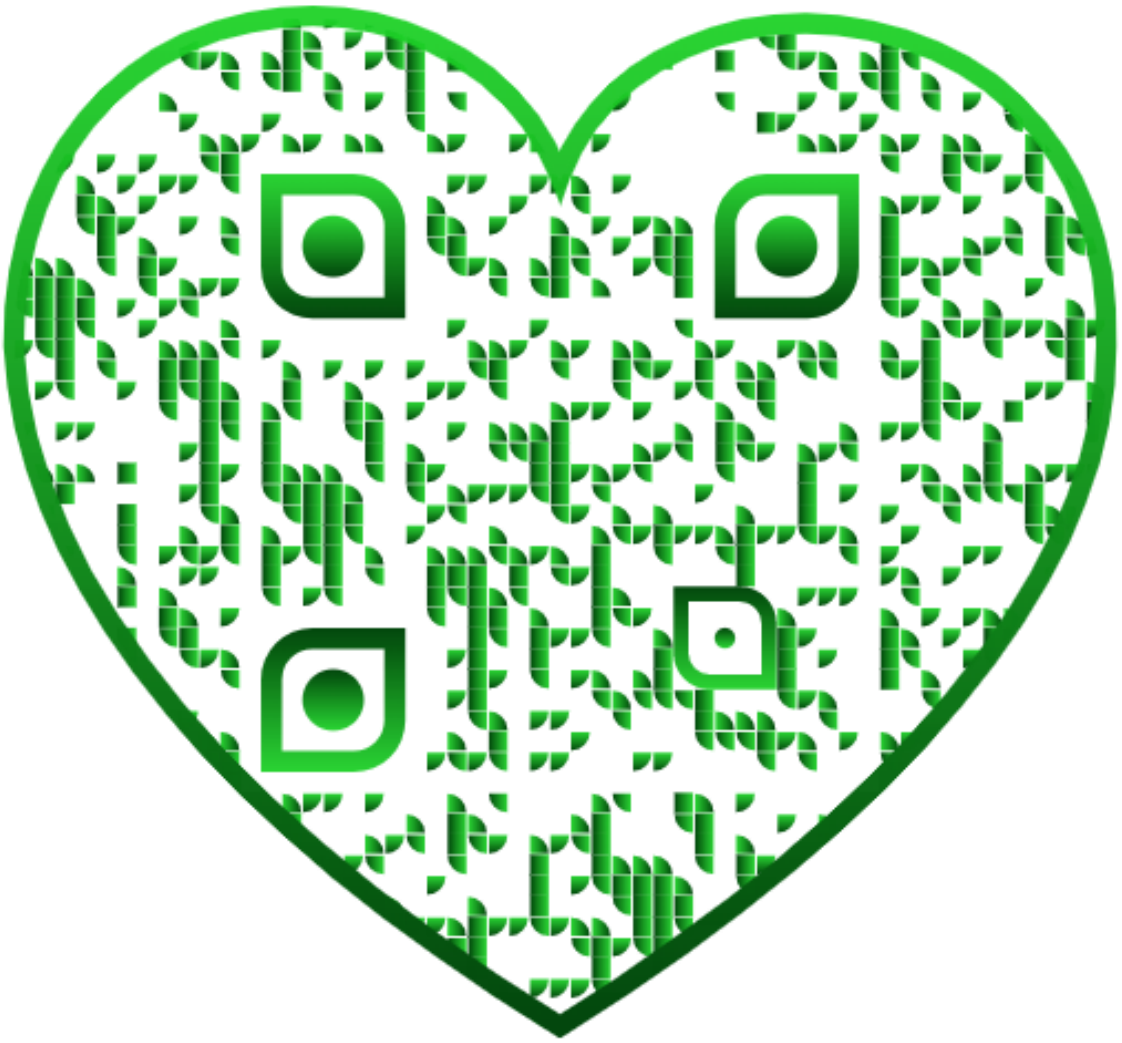
Volume 6, Number 2 January/February 2002





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Orders: (800) 413-8296
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Mariann Miller - Sales and Advertising
Connie Miller - Administration
Contributing Editors:
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Bryan Kimsey
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How to Duplicate & Promote an Acoustic CD Release

1. **Send your music to radio.** No matter how you define your goals, you need to get your music to folk radio. One excellent way to do this is through a **radio-oriented sampler CD program**, such as the OASISACOUSTIC™ sampler CDs, which get the music of Oasis clients to hundreds of key radio stations throughout the U.S.

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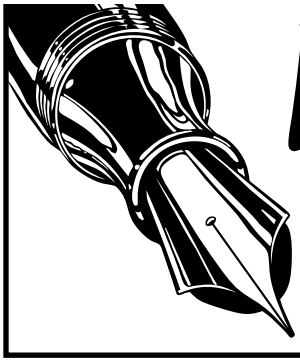

EDITOR'S PAGE

Merrill Guitar Winner

Congratulations to J. B. Baccus of Irving, Texas, who was the winner of the Merrill Brothers C-28 guitar raffle. J. B.'s name was drawn on November 10th at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend All-Star Jam concert. His name was one of over 5000 entered in the raffle that we ran during 2001 to help celebrate the fifth anniversary of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*. Brad Davis drew the name out of the barrel and Jim Merrill was on hand with the new Merrill guitar. Congratulations J.B.!

New Orrin Star Video *Flatpicking Primer* is Now Shipping

Over the past five years we have had a lot of people approach our festival booth and tell us that they already know how to play guitar (fingerstyle, blues, rock, classical, etc.) but are new to flatpicking and want an instructional book or video that will teach them how to do it. They are not interested in a beginning guitar instructional book or video, nor do they simply want something that is going to just build a repertoire. They are interested in something that is going to teach them how to understand the essence of the flatpicking style, how to develop strong right hand technique so that they can develop power and speed, and information that is going to help them learn to develop their own solos. Unfortunately, there was no comprehensive instructional book, CD, or video on the market that thoroughly addressed these concepts.

After we shot *Orrin Star's Rhythm Guitar Workshop* video last winter, and I saw how great Orrin was in front of the camera, how detailed he covered his subject, what a good communicator he was, and what a good teacher he was, I approached him with the idea to address the topics listed above on a new video project. Orrin went home and put together a lesson plan and sent me an outline. After looking at Orrin's outline and discussing some of his ideas with him, I was certain that we could put together a flatpicking instructional video that I could whole-heartedly recommend to guitar players who are interested in learning how to flatpick. After Orrin came down to the studio in November and shot the video, I realized that Orrin had not only given valuable information to those who are just breaking in to the flatpicking style—he addressed many topics relevant to helping players who have flatpicked for years.

Most of us have primarily learned how to play, and built our repertoire, by reading tablature from books or magazines. Given the fact that all of this printed material is available, Orrin decided to focus his discussions and examples in the video on "What the tab won't tell you." I am proud of this project and I think that those who have been flatpicking for years will gain as much out of this video as those who are new to flatpicking. See the ad on page 65 to learn more about this video.

Doc Watson & David Grisman

In Concert

In this unique video Doc and David with their friend Jack Lawrence present their unique blend of country, jazz, bluegrass and folk-music.

Titles include: Bye Bye Blues, Shady Grove, Summertime, Sweet Georgia Brown, Hobo Bill's Last Ride, In The Pines. Long Journey Home, Lonesome Moonlight Waltz, EMD, I Don't Love Nobody, Blue Eyed Jane, Kentucky Waltz, Will You Be Loving Another Man, Deep River Blues, Soldier's Joy, Medley: Big Sandy/Salt Creek, Roll In My Sweet Baby's Arms, Roll On Buddy. ***Vestapol 13082 $24.95 (available in VHS & DVD)***

Legends Of Flatpicking Guitar

featuring Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Norman Blake & Dan Crary

Titles include: ***DOC WATSON & JACK LAWRENCE*** *Black Mountain Rag, Peach Pickin' Time Down In Georgia* ***TONY RICE ALL STAR JAM*** *Nine Pound Hammer, Cold On The Shoulder, Whitewater* ***NORMAN BLAKE & THE RISING FAWN STRING ENSEMBLE*** *Jimmy Brown The Newsboy, Salty, Molly Bloom* ***DAN CRARY*** *Country Boy Rock N' Roll, Medley: The Fishing Creek Blues/ The Blackbird/Turkey In The Straw/ Bonaparte's Retreat/Arkansas Traveller* ***DOC WATSON & JACK LAWRENCE*** *Bye Bye Blues, Tennessee Stud* ***TONY RICE & RICKY SKAGGS*** *Where The Soul Of Man Never Dies, More Pretty Girls Then One* ***NORMAN BLAKE & THE RISING FAWN STRING ENSEMBLE*** *Nashville Blues, Medley: The Cuckoo's Nest/Over The Waterfall/Opera Reel/Cherokee Shuffle* ***TONY RICE ALL STAR*** *Jam Freeborn Man* ***DOC & MERLE WATSON*** *Medley:Sheeps In The Meadow/ Stoney Fork, Medley: Bill Cheatham/Salt Creek* ***DAN CRARY*** *Lady's Fancy, Black Mountain Rag* ***Vestapol 13005 $24.95 (available in VHS & DVD)***

Doc Watson

Rare Performances 1963-1981

Titles include: Deep River Blues, Nine Pound Hammer, Daniel Prayed, St. James Hospital, Shady Grove, Black Mountain Rag, Stack O' Lee Blues, Tom Dooley, Southbound, Way Downtown, Lonesome Road, Medley: Nancy Roland/Salt Creek, I Wish I Was A Mole In The Ground, Sweet Georgia Brown, Peach Pickin' Time Down In Georgia, Will The Circle Be Unbroken, Raincrow Bill, Tennessee Stud, Medley: Big Sandy/Bill Cheatham, A Roving On A Winters Night and Black Mountain Rag.

Vestapol 13023 $24.95

Doc Watson

Rare Performances 1982-1993

Titles include: New River Train, Shady Grove, Going To Chicago, Blue Yodel No. 12, Sleep Baby Sleep, You Must Come In At The Door, Dear Old Sunny South By The Sea, Amazing Grace, Foggy Mountain Top, What Is A Home Without Love, Nine Pound Hammer, Riding On That Midnight Train, Fire Ball Mail, Shake Rattle & Roll, Make Me Pallet, In The Jailhouse Now, Going To Chicago & Life Gets Tee-jus. ***Vestapol 13024 $24.95***

Doc's Guitar Jam

Featuring Doc Watson, Tony Rice, Dan Crary, Jack Lawrence and Steve Kaufman.

Titles include: ***DOC WATSON, TONY RICE, DAN CRARY, STEVE KAUFMAN & JACK LAWRENCE*** *Ragtime Annie, Blue Ridge Mountain Blues, St. Anne's Reel, More Pretty Girls Then One, Walk On By, Little Sadie, Black Mountain Rag, Lime Rock, Billy In The Lowground Going Down This Road Feeling Bad • DOC & FRIENDS What Does The Deep Sea Say, Ramshackle Shack* ***DOC WITH TONY RICE, STEVE KAUFMAN, JACK LAWRENCE & T. MICHAEL COLEMAN*** *Wildwood Flower.*

Vestapol 13055 $24.95 (available in VHS & DVD)

Tony Rice

The Video Collection

This video presents Tony at the 1992 Merle Watson Festival with Ricky Skaggs, Sam Bush, Mark O'Connor, Jerry Douglas and others.

Titles include: ***TONY RICE ALL STAR JAM*** *Red Haired Boy, Blue Railroad Train, I Wonder Where You Are Tonight, White House Blues* ***TONY RICE UNIT*** *He Rode All The Way To Texas, Dusty Miller, Salt Creek, Another Lonesome Day, Nine Pound Hammer, Darcy Farrow, Crazy Creek, Little Sadie and Shadows* ***TONY RICE & FRIENDS*** *The Old Home Place, Bluegrass Breakdown*

Vestapol 13058 $24.95

Norman & Nancy Blake

Titles include: ***OHIO, 1980*** *Medley: Randall Collins & Done Gone, Medley: Green Leaf Fancy, Da Slockit Light, Briar Picker Brown & Stoney Fork* ***ALABAMA, 1984*** *Gray Coat Soldiers • Medley: Knockbauer Polka #1 & #2 & The El Paso Waltz • Medley: Within A Mile, The Durham Rangers, Far From Home, Primrose Last* ***SOUTH CAROLINA, 1988*** *Jordan Am A Hard Road To Travel, Prettiest Little Girl In The County, The Little Stream Of Whiskey* ***IOWA, 1995*** *Hangin' Dog, Battleship Of Maine Medley: The Kitchen Girl & Cattle In The Cane, Democratic Donkey Is In His Stall Again*

Vestapol 13059 $24.95

Billy In The Lowground

Old Time Music from the Newport Folk Festival, 1966

Titles include: ***CLARK KESSINGER*** *Sally Anne Johnson, Poca River Blues, Wednesday Night Waltz, Billy In The Lowgrounds, Leather Britches, Chicken Reel* ***KILBY SNOW*** *Shady Grove, Please Don't Take Advantage Of Me, Wildwood Flower, Close By* ***JIMMY DRIFTWOOD*** *Old Joe Clark, Galloping Horse* ***GROUP*** *Turkey In The Straw* ***COON CREEK GIRLS*** *East Virginia, Johnson Boys* ***ISON J. FONTENOT*** *La Valse De Dimanche Aprés Midi* ***AL & VIRGINIA MANES*** *Romeo's Last Chance, Red Fox Waltz •* ***GROUP*** *Red River Valley* ***FIDDLER'S CONTEST*** *Katie Hill, McMongan's Reel, Cackling Hen, Sally Anne Johnson* ***Vestapol 13051 $24.95***

Shady Grove

featuring Kilby Snow,Dock Boggs, Tommy Jarrell and Roscoe Holcomb

This video presents poignant and exciting musical performances by four highly expressive and individualistic makers of old time country music.

Titles include: ***KILBY SNOW, 1970*** *Troubles, Cindy, Shady Grove, Raggedy Ann, Two-Timing Blues & You Are My Flower* ***ROSCOE HOLCOMB, 1972*** *Black-Eyed Susie, Pretty Polly & Old Smokey* ***DOCK BOGGS, 1966*** *Country Blues, Pretty Polly & I Hope I Live* ***TOMMY JARRELL, 1976*** *Bonaparte's Retreat, Cumberland Gap, The Boll Weavil, Old Jimmie Sutton, Forked Deer, Sail Away Ladies, Cripple Creek, Breaking Up Christmas & John Brown's Dream* ***Vestapol 13071 $24.95***

Legends Of Old Time Music

featuring Clarence Ashley, Doc Watson, Clint Howard, Fred Price, Pete Steele, Roscoe Holcomb, and others

Titles include: ***CLARENCE ASHLEY*** *Free Little Bird, The Cuckoo* ***ROSCOE HOLCOMB*** *Across The Rocky Mountain, John Hardy, Little Birdie, Graveyard Blues, Little Grey Mule* ***PETE STEELE*** *Pay Day At Coal Creek, Coal Creek March, Galilee* ***SAM McGEE*** *Wheels, Mississippi Sawyer* ***DOC WATSON, CLINT HOWARD & FRED PRICE*** *Way Downtown, Daniel Prayed, Lee Highway Blues* ***TOMMY JARRELL*** *John Henry, Drunken Hiccups, John Brown's Dream* ***SOMMERS, YOUNG & HOLCOMB*** *Bile Them Cabbage Down, Grey Eagle , Red Apple Rag* ***CORBETT GRIGSBY*** *Pretty Polly* ***JEAN RITCHIE*** *The Cuckoo* ***THE WALKER FAMILY*** *Bowling Green, Hangman, Rollie True Love, I'll Be Somewhere Listening* ***JEAN & EDNA RITCHIE*** *My Pretty Little Miss, The Four Marys*

Vestapol 13026 $24.95

Doc & Merle Watson In Concert

In this concert recorded in 1980, Doc is joined by his son Merle on guitar and banjo and T. Michael Coleman on bass.

Titles include: Way Downtown, Sadie, Frosty Morn, Medley: Big Sandy/Old Joe Clark, Don't Think Twice, It's Alright, Summertime, Smoke, Smoke, Sweet Georgia Brown, Pallet On Your Floor, Streamline Cannonball, Wild Bill Jones, Natural Born Gamblin Man, Got The Blues Can't Be Satisfied, I Miss The Mississippi And You, 'Rangement Blues and Medley: Yankee Doodle/ Dixie ***Vestapol 13030 $24.95***

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Dan Tyminski

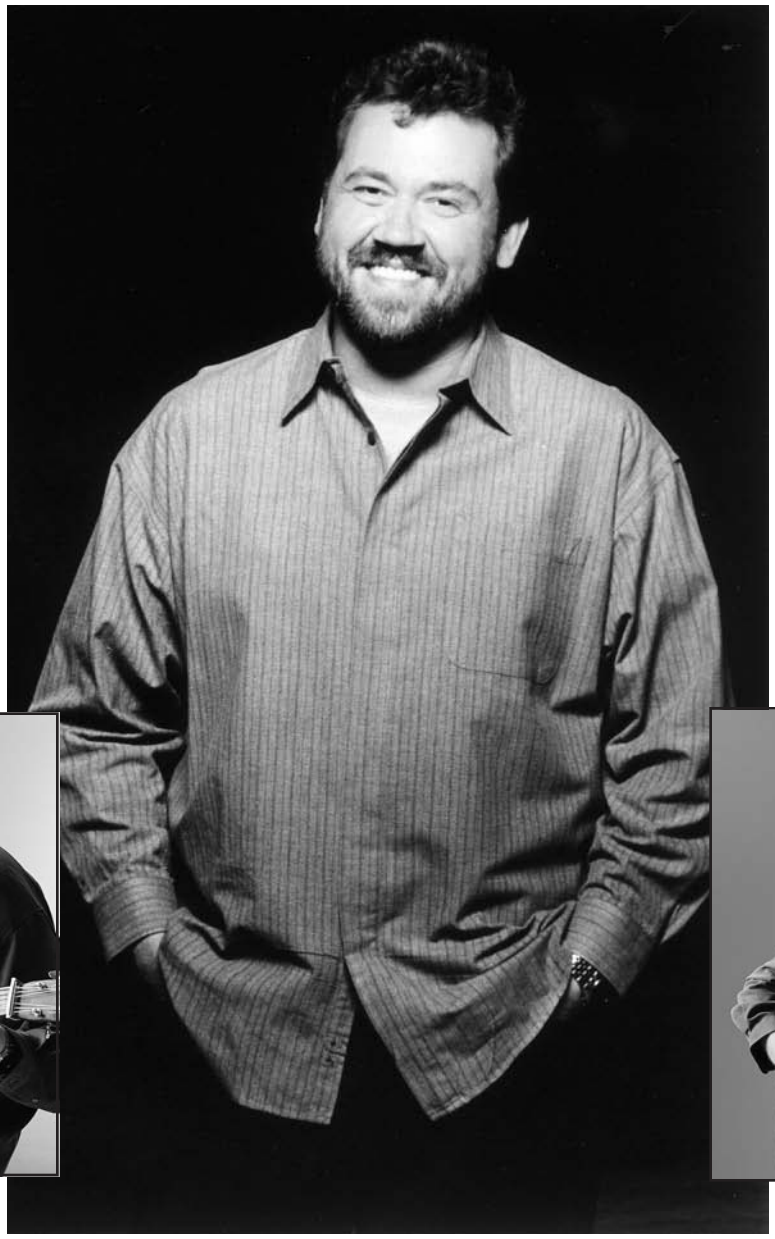


Photo: Pamela Springsteen

by David McCarty

The little club in New England had long been a favorite of the Tyminski family, who pursued bluegrass and old-time country music around Vermont and the surrounding states in the same way that some families ferry their kids to tennis tournaments or marching band competitions. That night, however, little Dan Tyminski had a special request. He wanted his mother to ask Smokey Green, the singer on stage, if he could sing a song for the audience. But Patricia Tyminski had a better idea. "If you want to sing so badly, you're going to have to go ask him yourself," the proud mother told her precocious youngest child. And so he did, marching right up to the seasoned professional entertainer and tugging on his pant leg to get his attention.

"He was extremely encouraging, as was the audience," says Dan today. "I sang a John Denver song, I think. From then on, my parents took me to radio stations and festivals, and I got up and sang songs with anyone who would have me." To hear him tell his story, he never even considered being anything other than a fulltime, professional musician. "I think I knew as far back as I could remember, pretty much," he allows. "There was never a question that I wouldn't. I had so much encouragement as a kid. I've had all my friends and family telling me I was going to be a musician as far back as eight years old. I am a lucky man to be where I am today."

Luckier still are the millions of listeners who've discovered bluegrass and old-time country music through Dan's superb singing and instrumental work with his fulltime band, the Grammy Award-winning Alison

Photo: Brance Gillihan

Dan Tyminski with the Dan Tyminski Band (Dan Tyminski-mandolin, Barry Bales-bass, Jeff White-guitar, Ron Block (not shown)-banjo)

Krauss and Union Station, and his breakthrough performance as George Clooney's voice double on "Man of Constant Sorrow" from the movie *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?* The companion CD from the movie has sold more than two million copies, bringing Tyminski international acclaim. That single received the Country Music Association's prestigious "Single of the Year" award in 2001, with a true "Dapper Dan" Tyminski walking proudly on stage to accept the coveted trophy before an all-star audience of Nashville heavyweights and a national TV audience at least 10 times larger than the total population of his home state of Vermont.

"It's definitely been fun to see the attention that it has gotten. It's very cool," he explains. "As far as me being the voice of bluegrass, that's a hard one to swallow. There are so many people doing so many wonderful things, I'm just feel lucky to be a small part of it." Dan's success from *Oh Brother* has definitely impacted his career. He's now the number one hit generator of Doobie Shea Record's website, and he's gone from being utterly unrecognized to having fans stop him in the mall or at the grocery and congratulate him on the success of the song and the movie soundtrack. "It's new for me. It's kind of fun. I have to be on my toes a little bit more. It's interesting to think that one song can have that much of an impact on a life or a career or both," he says of the phenomenon.

Success such as this, as in most things in life, didn't happen overnight, nor should it be seen as an aberration or oddity. Music has always been Dan's life, and it's great to see him receive this type of popular acclaim at this stage of his career, which already was on the up escalator even before he answered the audition call for the movie. Music—mostly bluegrass and country—filled the Tyminski home. He played a little mandolin and guitar as he grew up, but one specific incident led him to passionately pursue playing banjo. His brother came home one day and was playing the classic *J.D. Crowe and the New South* CD (Rounder 0044) on his car stereo as he pulled into the driveway. "That banjo sound just knocked me out, and I wanted to start playing," he admits today.

From the age of 13 until the day he joined the Lonesome River Band at age 21, banjo consumed Dan Tyminski's heart and musical soul. But his role with the LRB was not to be on banjo. Instead, he was asked to fill in on mandolin on what was supposed to be a temporary basis. It turned out, however, to be permanent and he spent the next five years with one of the most popular and influential bands in bluegrass. Despite that success, though, when Alison Krauss needed a lead singer, Dan saw an opportunity he couldn't resist. He joined AKUS, but with Adam Steffey on mandolin, Dan's role turned again, this time to guitarist for the group. His first stint with Union Station, however, lasted just four months. "I felt like I was cheating three others guys. LRB had to suffer while I got to do the job of a lifetime," he says now.

Heeding his conscience, he returned to LRB and spent the next year and a half finishing a record and completing touring and festival obligations with the band. But the call of AKUS was too strong, and he returned when he felt the time was right. "I felt very uncertain I had made the right choice to go back with LRB. I had to weigh everything out and see what was in my heart. I absolutely found myself in love with what AKUS was playing, the diversity of songs. Nothing against Lonesome River Band, they're a fantastic band. But with Alison's music, the margins are wider. There are more styles of music, more

Dan Tyminski with the Lonesome River Band (Jerry McMillan-bass, Dan Tyminski-mandolin, Dale Perry-banjo, Tim Austin-guitar)

Photo: Pamela Springsteen

Dan Tyminski with Alison Krauss and Union Station: Dan Tyminski, Barry Bales, Ron Block, Jerry Douglas, Alison Krauss

influences. Ultimately, it's more fun," he explains.

"The music we produce pleases me. It's a very satisfying feeling to have five people who care so much about what they do. It's an extremely unique situation personally and musically. Everyone truly cares about what they do and we respect each other as people." Making the switch to guitar consumed Tyminski as he labored over the unique guitar breaks Tim Stafford had created. "I spent a lot of time trying to become a competent guitar player. I had calluses and a good right hand technique, so I sat down with the records to figure out what Tim Stafford had done. He's such a unique guitar player. So I took the part of that that needed to stay and started to build my own style with that," he recalls.

Playing with Ron Block and the other Union Station members also gave him a thorough schooling in developing a clear, dynamic approach to guitar. Dan kept his eyes glued to Ron's left hand at first to learn his chord positions and studied how he produced such a round, open tone on guitar until he eventually began to develop a sound he felt fit the rest of the band. "Everyone in the band is real concerned with what the others are doing," he says. "All of us tend to listen to each other's playing to figure out how we can best play with it. Ron has definitely been an inspiration on my guitar playing."

Given his new position, it's no surprise when Dan says, "Rhythm guitar is what I am most passionate about now." Surprisingly, the more he got into guitar, the more he realized that his early years as a banjo fanatic had left a lasting legacy of appreciating great guitarists that he now draws upon with AKUS. "I think it is interesting that later in life I realized why I liked the banjo so much: all the banjo players I loved had fantastic rhythm guitar players, like J.D. (Crowe) had Tony (Rice). Everyone I idolized played with a wonderful guitar player," he reveals. Playing with Ron Block's banjo, he strives to emulate the same rhythm techniques, tone and timing he first heard on those early banjo albums.

Dan's still a big fan of Tony's rhythm work, as well as Wyatt Rice's equally innovative style. "I like different people for different reasons. Some I like for their sense of timing, others for their sense of playing fills rhythmically. Some guitar players, Tony and Wyatt Rice for example, sound like a whole band when they play rhythm guitar," he says. AKUS has powerfully influenced Dan's lead guitar work, leading him to develop a lean, well-honed style that emphasizes melody over hot licks. "For my style, as far as my leads go, I like to make sure the melody is first and foremost. I'm happy when you can always tell what song I'm playing if you hear one of my solos," he explains.

"I think there are ways you can stray from the melody and play around the melody, yet still keep the melody of the song intact. For me, that's the main thing I'm thinking of. I want my solos all to be interesting, but I also want to make a simple point and get it across. If the song is hard driving and gritty, I try to maintain that feel and sound to it in my solo. Coming to guitar late kept me from being lick-oriented. I've listened to tapes of me playing banjo and I can hear points where I was lick-oriented and when I was melody-oriented, and I can't stand that lick-oriented stuff now. There are so many people who play all kinds of stuff who still manage to do it with feeling and soul. That's truly what sets them apart."

Working with great singers, he adds, contributed enormously to his rhythm guitar style. "I think it's lots of fun to play with good vocalists. I've been blessed to play with some wonderful singers. It raises your awareness of what works and what doesn't," he reports. In his own playing, he often leaves out more than he adds, relying on a powerful 4/4 sense of rhythm that isn't bouncy or swinging. "I think if I were playing with different people, my playing would be different," he confirms. "There's very little I need to do in this band to make things work. In this situation, I always look for one more thing I can leave out. I keep a real simple approach and make sure I listen to the focus of what's in the song. If someone is playing their solo, that will be what I focus on. I don't want to divert attention away from the main focus of our sound."

As befits a rhythm guitar fanatic, Dan's guitar of choice is especially suited for big strums and powerful chordal work. It's a 1946 non-scalloped Martin D-28. "I use it for pretty much everything," the guitarist notes. "I think its strongest quality is that it's not boomy. It's not unfriendly to

the mic." The instrument is not entirely original; several cracks have been fixed with cleats and the original fingerboard was replaced with one from a 1939 herringbone with the older slotted diamond inlay pattern. He also uses a Bourgeois slope-shouldered 12-fret dreadnought at times. "I'm partial to that one on the slower numbers," he confirms. "It doesn't quite have the same growl as the Martin."

Dan tends to keep his guitars with a very high action because he plays very aggressively. "I like to play as hard as I want without having it buzz," he tells *FGM*. He prefers the new Elixir Nanoweb strings. "I've found they have the long life of the older model, but they have more brightness and presence when you put them on. I don't know what I'd have done without them. I've been known to change strings after a sound check, and now I play five shows on the same set. It's crazy," he says enthusiastically.

A stickler for having things just right in all aspects of his guitar playing, Dan meticulously shapes his own picks from natural tortoise shell. "I put as much importance on the pick as I do on the instrument," he adds firmly. He shapes the shell into a rounded triangle and uses fairly stiff shell material in the 1.5 mm range. "I can bend it a little when I squeeze it," he says of the pick's rigidity. He uses no internal mic or pickup, although the guitar is rigged that way, preferring to go au naturale. "We've always taken the approach that we'll sacrifice volume to get good sound," he explains, adding with a nod to frustrated sound crews everywhere, "That's not always a popular point of view."

With his successful career already in overdrive, Dan says he's "trying to figure out how to put more days in a year" right now. He's preparing to record a second solo CD as a followup to his wonderful *Carry Me Across The Mountain* project, and he's done about 20 dates so far with Barry Bales, Ron Block and Jeff White. "I would love to do that some more," he agrees. And don't be surprised if someday at one of his shows, a cute brown-headed tyke works up the nerve to tug on Dan Tyminski's pant leg and asks to sing a song. You already know the answer.

Dan and Chris Thile at Merlefest 2000

The Transcriptions:

In this issue we are offering two transcriptions of Dan Tyminski's guitar work. The first is "Man of Constant Sorrow." We have had more requests for a transcription of this tune than we have for any other tune since we started publishing this magazine. We could not publish an article about Dan Tyminski and leave this tune out. Due to licensing complications, we could not provide this tune on our audio companion. However, if you are one of the over 2 million people who owns the soundtrack to *Oh Brother, Where Art Thou*, then you already have this cut.

This transcription of "Man of Constant Sorrow" comes from the scene where the Soggy Bottom Boys are in the small rural radio station (not the one from the political rally). What we have transcribed here is Dan's intro through the first half of the first verse. The second half of the verse is very similar.

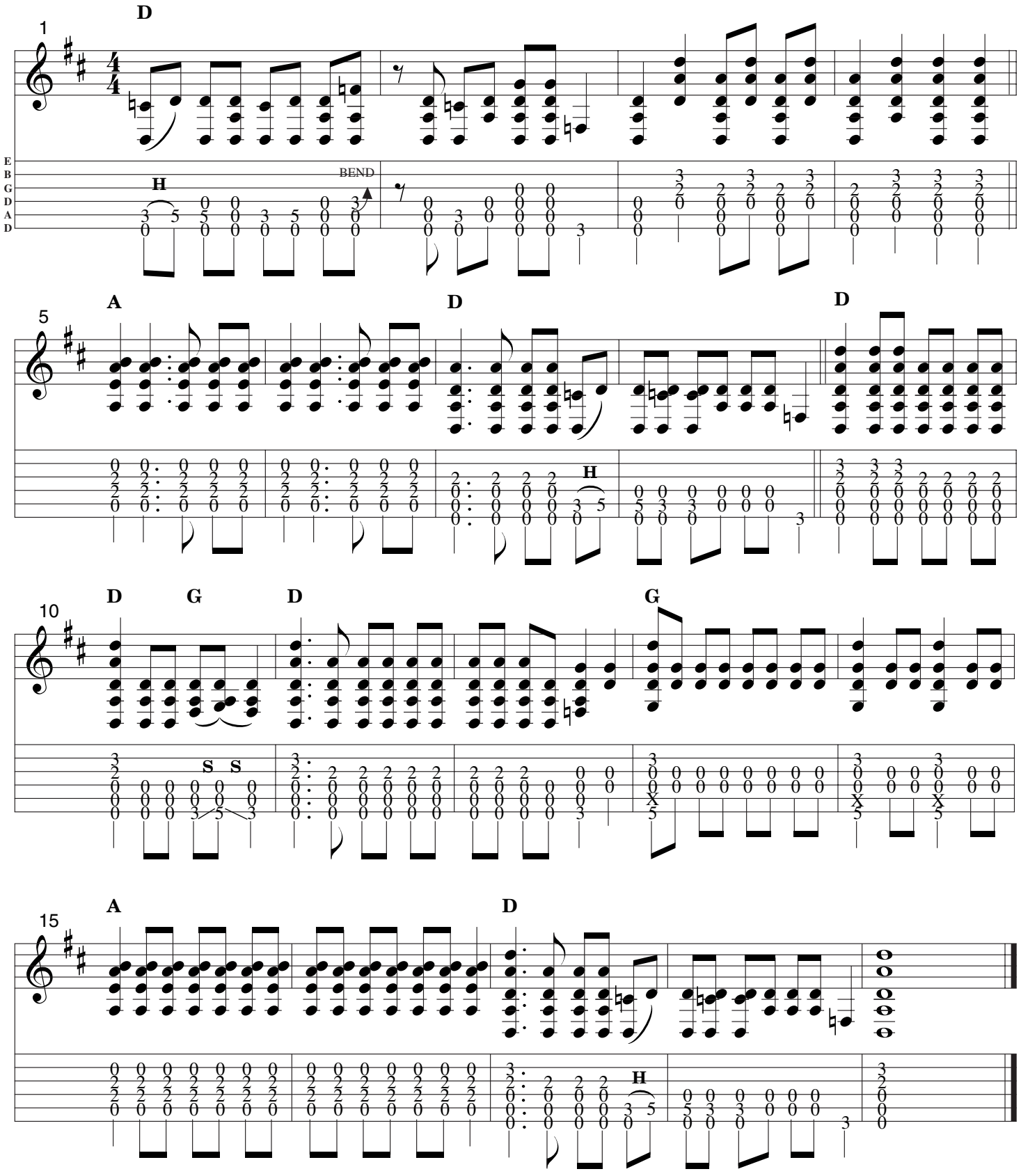
Brad Davis transcribed the tune for us and had a few things to say about the difficulty of transcribing this kind of guitar part. Brad said, "Dan's guitar part here is a lot easier to play than it was to write down on paper. He keeps his right hand constantly moving up and down and he is not focused on any one note when he strikes the strings. He hits two or three notes with any given up or down stroke. It gives the tune a very backwoodsy, bluesy feel. Dan does this to great effect and I would suspect that this was exactly what the producer was looking for with this tune."

Brad continues, "The trick to getting this guitar part right is all in the right hand. Looking at the tab, you can see that Dan is mostly just holding chords with the left hand. The right hand is loose, in constant motion, and sets up the groove. He is not real worried about what notes he is hitting with the right hand, he keeps the right hand in motion and uses right hand dynamics to help set the groove and provide the interest. If you listen closely to the recording you will notice that some strokes are very heavy while others are very light."

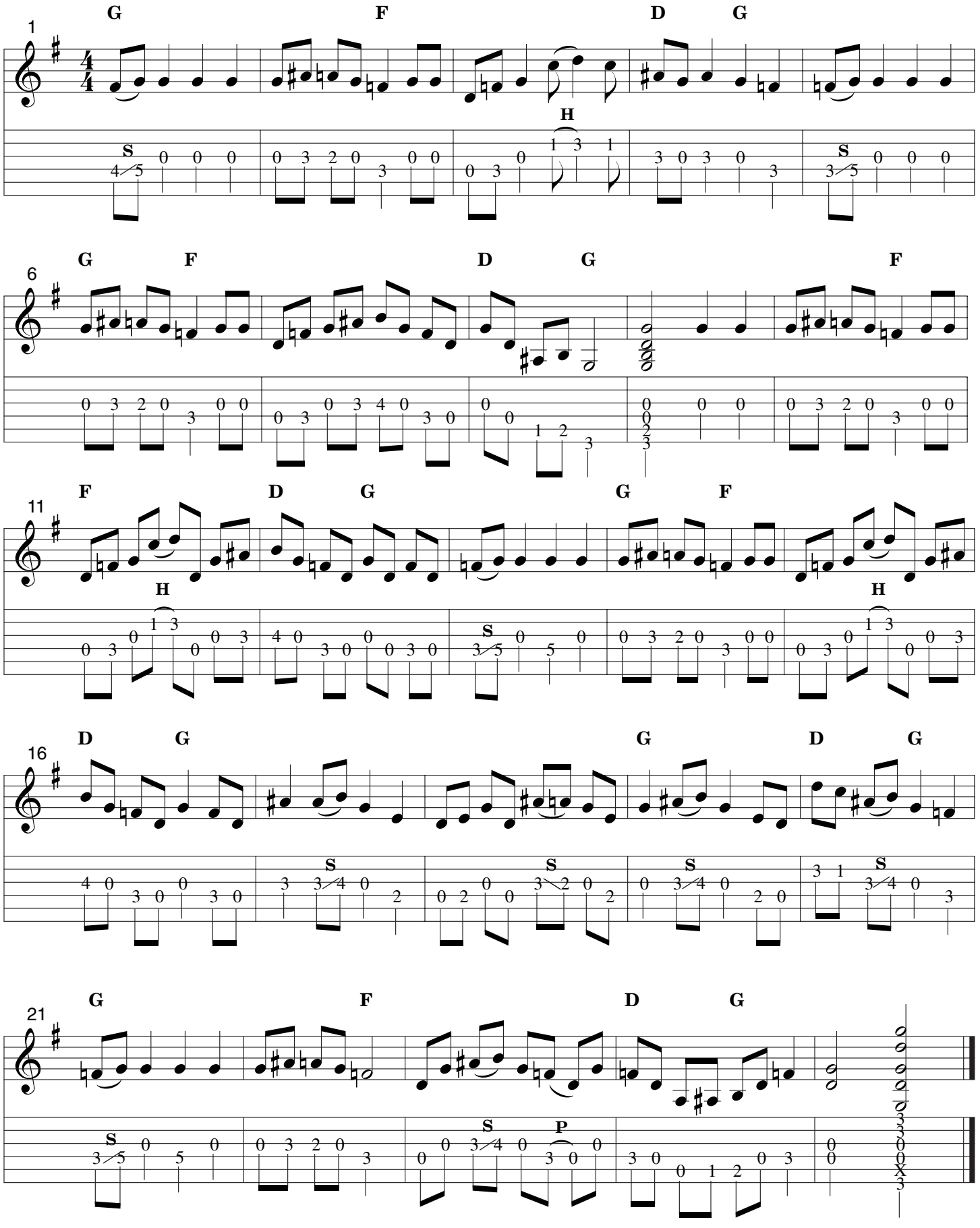
The second tune we have transcribed, "Green Fees," is an instrumental that Dan wrote for his *Carry Me Across the Mountain* CD. We have included this tune on the companion audio CD that accompanies this issue.

Man of Constant Sorrow

Dropped D Tuning
Capo 3

Arranged by Dan Tyminski
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Green Fees

Capo 2

Written by Dan Tyminski
Transcribed by Brad Davis

Peartree

by Craig Vance

"Peartree" is a pretty cool tune that can be found on Doc Watson's *Memories* CD (Sugar Hill Records SUG-2204). The tune has a real old-timey feel to it, with a hint of Cajun.

What I have tabbed out here is close to the original. The exception falls in the 2nd measure, where I've added a few notes to actually smooth the line. The original version tends to be a little more staccato in nature. I felt that the tune needed a smoother run here to differentiate the feeling of the line. Otherwise the first measure and the second measure would only differ by a few notes. Then in third measure I tossed in the hammer-on and pull-offs for the same reason.

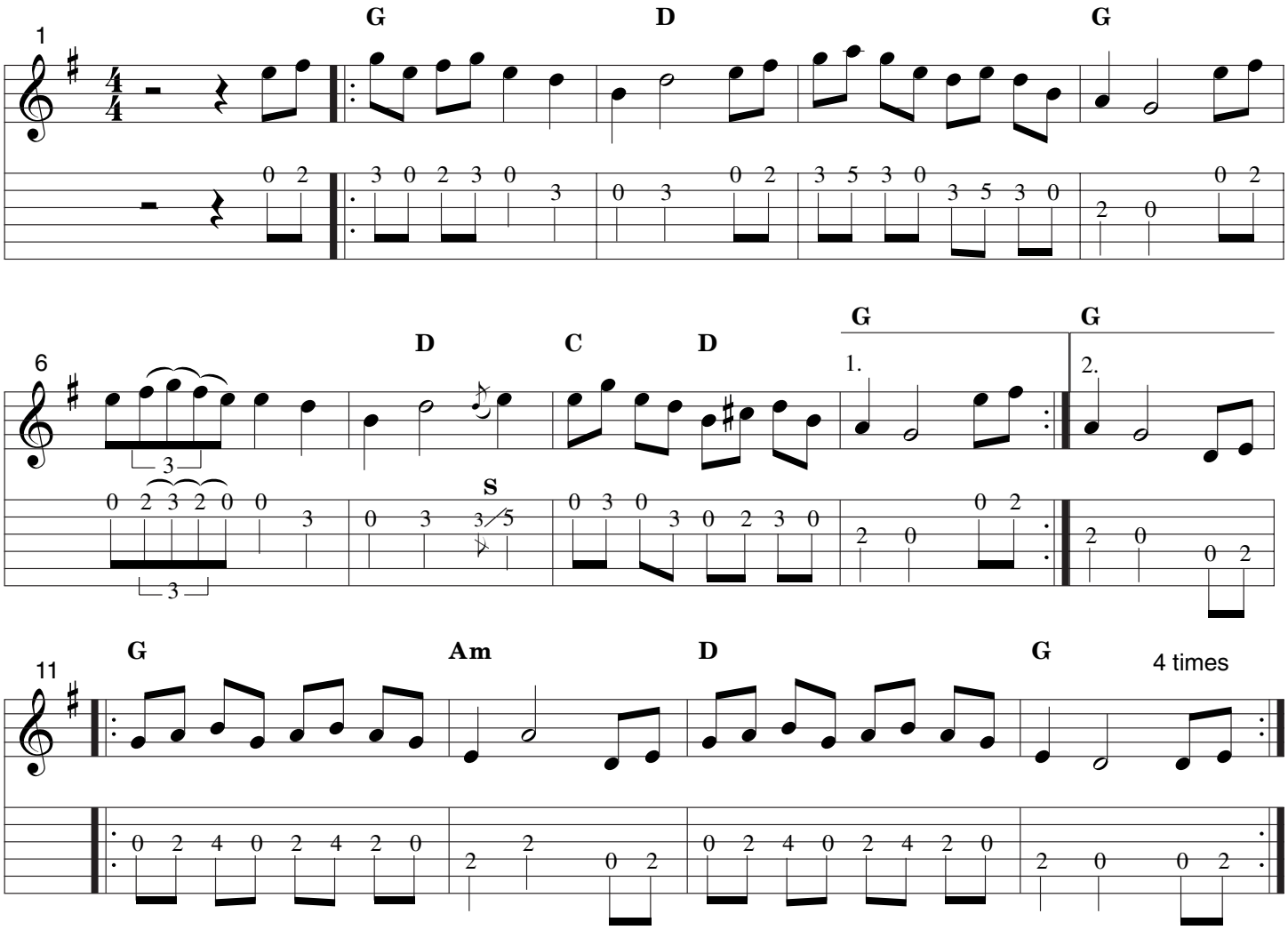
The "B" part of the tune sounds easier to the ear than it is to play. I'm not saying that it is difficult, just tricky. When I was working this up I found the transition from the "A" part to the "B" part needed to be pretty clearly defined. It is more of an exactness of timing than anything else. After slowing my playing down to work through that transition, I gradually felt the flow become natural. I also figured out that what was holding me up was simply the first 4 notes in the "B" section. I had the tendency to begin the line later than it actually occurs in the tune.

"Peartree" is as much fun to play as it is to listen to. If you can get with a fiddle player to work this one up, you will know what I mean when I say that it has a Cajun feel. A good squeeze box player could add the same texture lif you can find one! Have fun with this tune, the next one might not be this easy!

Craig Vance is currently the lead guitar player for the McKrells, an upstate New York based band which features a unique musical blend of Celtic, American folk, bluegrass, and country. His guitar work can also be heard on Frank Wakefield's newest project.

Pear Tree

Arranged by Craig Vance



Beginner's Page

by Dan Huckabee

How to Seduce Your Guitar

Last issue we got a little playful. We made up some easy generic chord progressions and just let ourselves experience the way the guitar felt in our hands, and the way it sounded to our ears. It was nice because it wasn' t tedious. It was kind of therapy, kind of subliminal ear training, and a bit of a chord changing workout all at the same time. The simplicity of those exercises warmed us up, allowed us to slow down from the speed race that is so common in modern flatpicking guitar, and it allowed us to discover nuances, phenomena, and sensations that occur when an exercise is very basic.

It might surprise you to know that Tony Rice has spent more hours getting the feel of the instrument than he has learning millions of fast hot licks. In other words, this concept "ain't" just for beginners. Tony is not just interested in lots of notes. He's also interested in quality.

My swim coach actually spends more time "lying around" in the water than he does swimming laps. People think he's crazy. "That weirdo has been out there treading water with his eyes closed for the past 3 hours!" Why? Because he's actually "making friends" with the water. He's learning its characteristics, its reactions to his movements and his reactions to its movements. Well, you might find it interesting to know that "weirdo" holds the world record for the lowest swim times for all 4 competitive swim strokes in his age division (never mind his age). He even had a streak in the 90s where he beat his own record 7 consecutive years! He's the only guy I know who chooses not to "fight" the water. In fact, he might just be the "Tony Rice" of swimming. I think we can all agree that Tony doesn't "fight" the guitar. Let's just surrender and admit that to a small degree (every now and then), we are fighting our guitars.

Maybe this little activity merits one more magazine issue, so grab your guitar! Ok, last time we used the key of G. So this time let's try it in C. Strum 4 beats of C, 4 beats of F, 4 beats of G, then 4 beats of C. Now that was therapeutic. How about doing it again, but this time with your eyes closed. This might eliminate some distractions, which will allow you to listen just a little bit closer. Did you make any discoveries? What were they? If you'd like, write them down in a diary. By the way, you don't have to make each chord exactly 4 beats long. You can stay on each chord as long as you like to create variation. I'm just here to get you started and to plant seeds. The whole concept here is for you to deviate in any direction you'd like to go in. So start with me, use my ideas as a guide, but change it all up to suit your preferences as you go along.

Ok, let's do it again, but this time, lets hum a little melody as we strum the chords. Doesn't have to be fancy, just close your eyes and see where it takes you. If you can hum something that sounds like it's compatible with those chords, this means that you are really getting familiar with the sound of those chord changes (at least enough to be able to anticipate a compatible melody). Believe me, this is developing your ear and increasing your awareness of many things. If you find that your humming gets pulled to "Wabash Cannonball", I Saw The Light" or some other familiar tune, see if you can pull it away to a different melody (without sounding out of tune with the key).

Now let's put a C in between each chord to come up with: C, F, C, G, C. Don't hesitate to take it around twice or as many times as you'd like. Ok, are you good at whistling? Works just as good as humming.

Next let's try sneaking the relative minor into the mix: C, Am, F, C, G, C. That's pretty close to the progression of "Billy in the Lowground." It' s also the chord progression for many of the 50s pop tunes like "Dream" by the Everly Brothers. Don't be surprised if you find yourself humming a familiar tune but you didn't realize those were the chords to that tune. Now let's try: C, C7, F, C, F, G, G7, C. A ragtime chord progression in C could be: C, A, D, G, C.

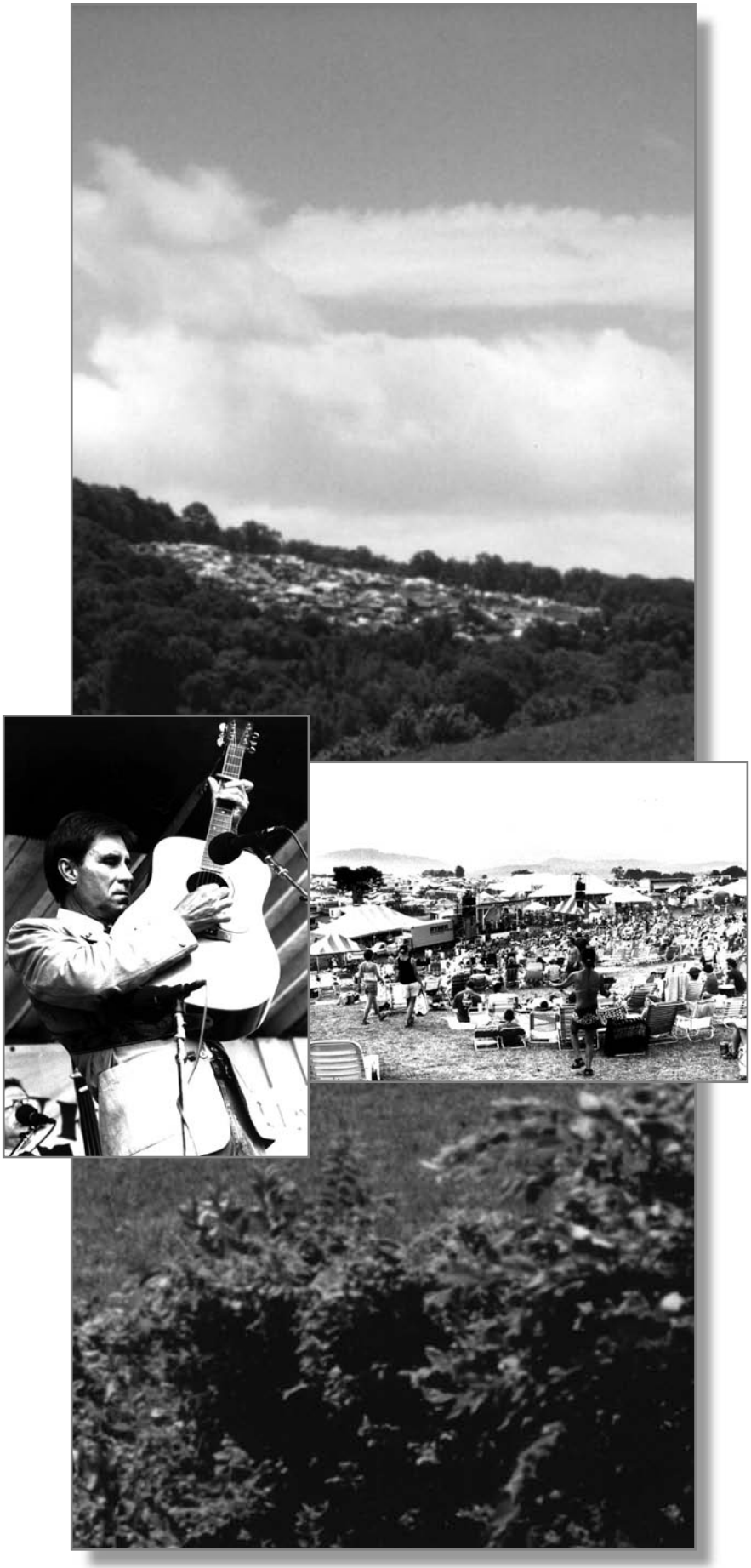
Next let's substitute D for the A minor. So we'll play: C, D, F, G, C. Then we'll throw in an extra C and we'll have: C, D, F, C, G, C.

Now let's go backwards around the bases. (very common in chord progressions). C, G, F, C. Ok, how about: C, G, C, F, C, G, C.

How about the key of D. Strum: D, G, A, D. Then try: D, G, D, A, D. How about backwards: D, A, G, D. Then try: D, D7, G, D, A, A7, D. A ragtime progression in D could be: D, B7, E, A, D.

Ok, you get the picture and I hope you'll take it beyond the confines of this little schedule that I've written. I further hope that you'll make discoveries beyond the ones that I've alluded to. Allow it to be a little meditative, a little focused, and even a little hypnotic. As a result, you' ll be a little more relaxed with your instrument, your ear will be a little more acute, and people will think you were born with a guitar in your hands.

As a companion to the above experience, I recommend our video called: *Understanding the Formula of Music Makes it So Easy*. (if you don't already have it). If you are interested, give us a call toll free at: 800-543-6125 or open our web site at: www.musicians-workshop.com <http://www.musicians-workshop.com>.



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Flatpick Rhythm Guitar

H.O.

by Joe Carr

"Fall Foliage"

For years, the fakebook was an underground book of jazz standards duplicated and sold among serious musicians. Unlike professional publications, producers of this "illegal" book paid none of the royalties required by law. Since these books often contained 500 or more songs, the royalties alone would have made these books very expensive to produce "legally." In recent years, perhaps through special licensing agreements, *The Real Book* appeared as a legal alternative. Now, for a reasonable price, you can easily purchase legal books full of great standards.

The standard format for these books is the melody of a song in standard notation with chords indicated in letter/number form (G-7, F#-7b5, etc.) over the appropriate beat of each measure. Using this information, jazz musicians can play an entire night of music without rehearsal and without ever having heard the tunes before! Whether you ever play in this kind of setting, the *Real Book* can be an excellent source of new material and an opportunity to learn about chord progressions.

"Fall Foliage" is a melody I wrote using the standard changes of "Autumn Leaves." Here are the changes in numbers:

2 5 1 4
7 3 6-6- (repeat)
7 3 6-6-
2 5 1 1
7 3 (6-b6)(5b5)
4 3 6-6-

The song is arranged with small movements between chords. Voicing chords so that they change easily from one to the other with each tone moving only a half step to a step and a half to the next chord, when possible, produces a professional sound.

Notes to Progression:
(1) The progression begins with a typical II-V chord change in measures 1-2.
(2) In measure 5, we jump up the neck to a form of F#m7b5 that spells 1, b5, b7, b3. Don't be confused that this shape is also a D9 at this position.
(3) The B7b9 in measure 10 spells 3, b7, b9, 5 and looks just like an Ebdim.
(4) The chord sequence in measure 19 is repeated in measure 20, two frets lower.

Once you have mastered this arrangement, get a fakebook and try out these ideas on new songs.

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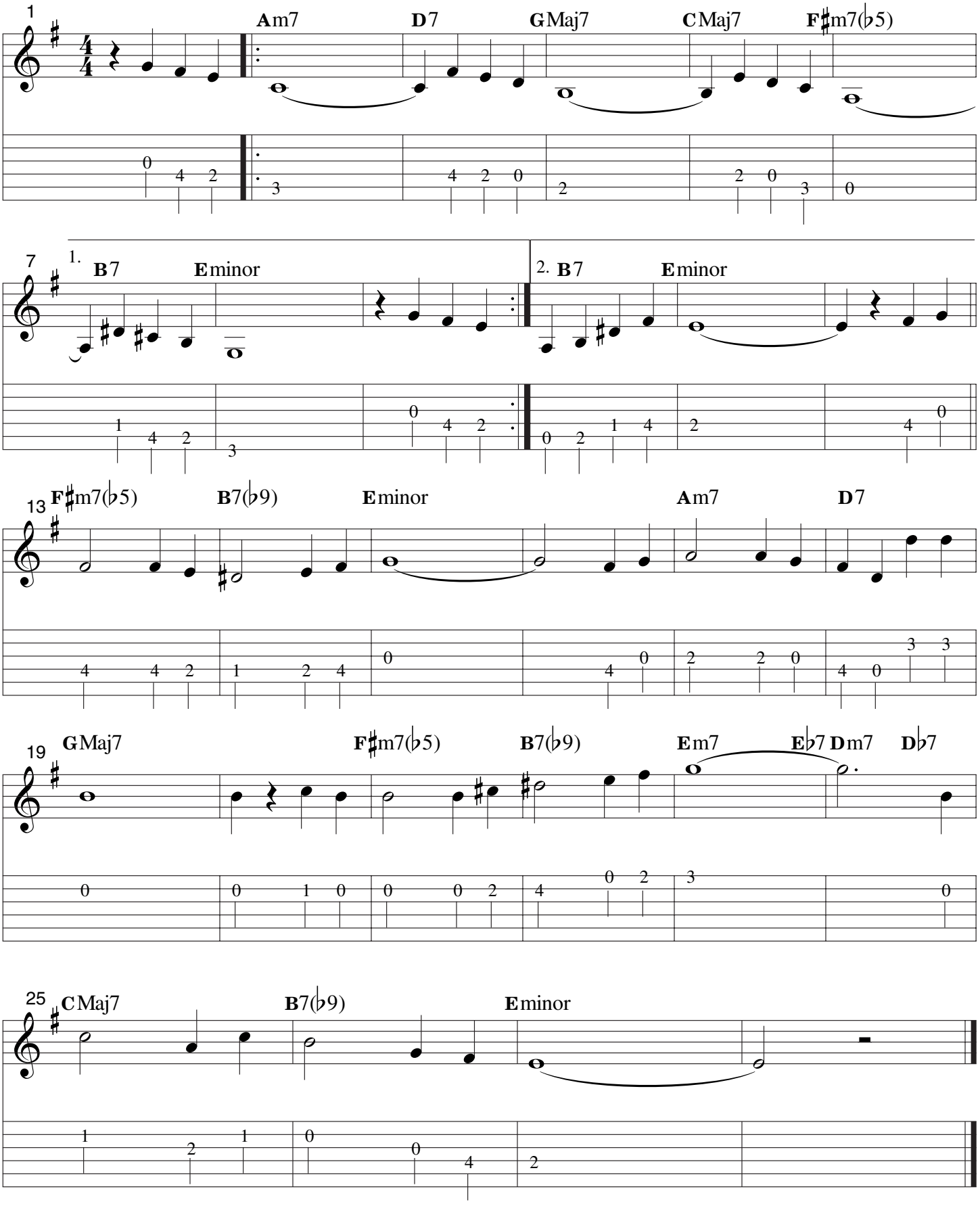
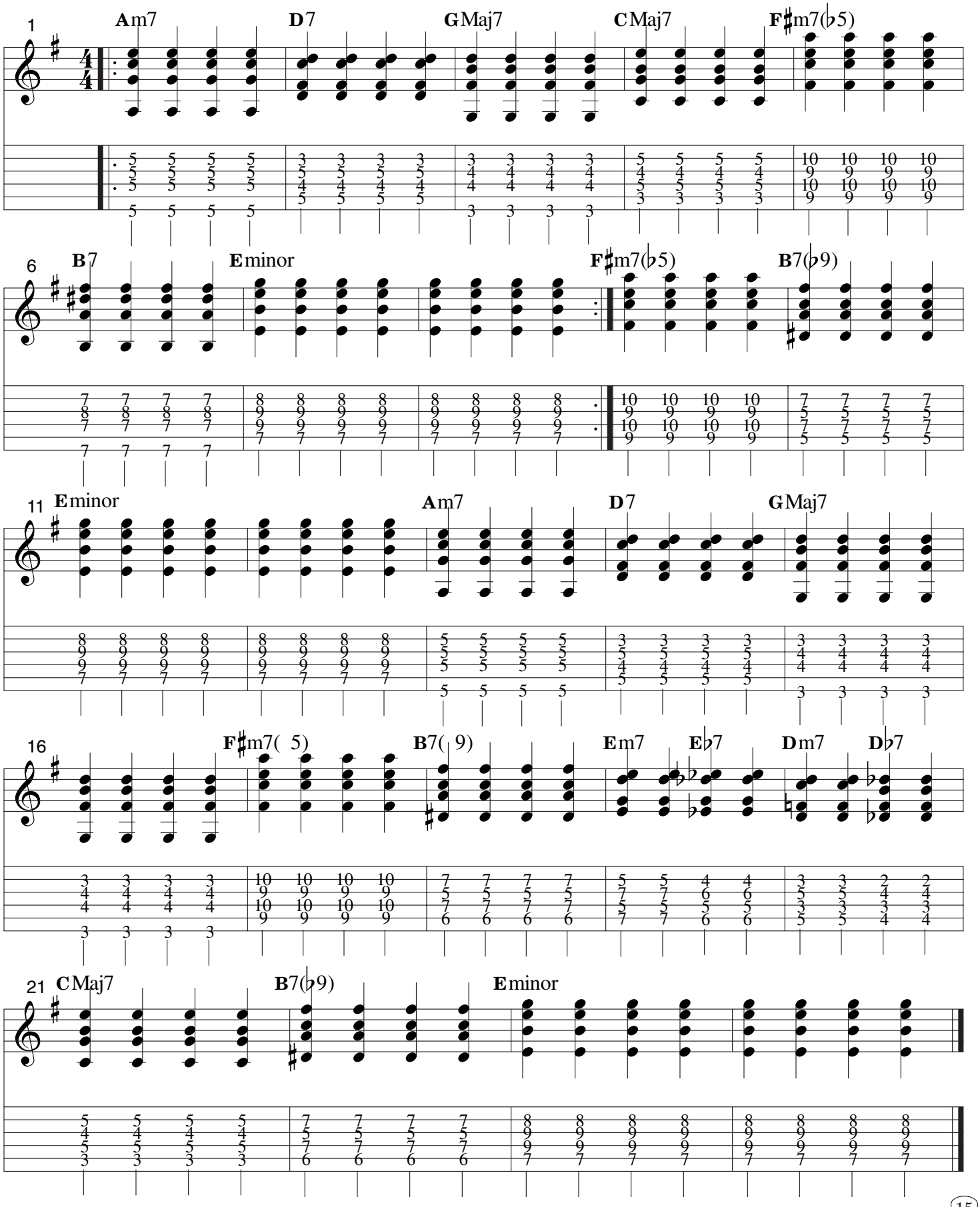
Fall Foliage (lead)

Arranged by Joe Carr

Fall Foliage (rhythm)

Arranged by Joe Carr



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Roanoke 2001

A First Timer's Report

by Christopher Thiessen

Photo: Stuart Jennings

David Grier, Brad Davis, Jim Hurst, and Richard Bennett jam at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend All-Star Jam concert

In June or July I started thinking seriously about attending the Third Annual Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend. Historically, I shy away from group seminars and workshops (like Roanoke or Kaufman's Flatpicking Kamps) because I don't routinely play with other pickers. Let's be honest: I just don't think I'm that good. I'm a decent rhythm player and I can sing, but flashy flatpicking? Nope. I've got a great collection of instructional books and videos, and have managed to learn a flatpicking tune or two from *FGM* articles (which I repeatedly play until my wife asks me to stop), and I'm lucky to know some excellent pickers who allow me to play with them. But I'm always hesitant to step out.

The opportunity arose for me to work at Roanoke as staff. I thought that was the best of both worlds: I could help out, meet some of the instructors, blend in without expectations, learn a bit, and pick some. No sweat. I decided to bring the family, made my reservations at Hotel Roanoke, polished the guitar, and bought a couple extra sets of strings.

We arrived Thursday afternoon. An extra day had been added to accommodate Chris Thile's touring schedule with Nickel Creek. I had seen Chris play several times, and was looking forward to attending part of his class (I also have delusions of playing the mandolin). Wyatt Rice was also scheduled to conduct a rhythm guitar workshop Thursday evening. Things were great. My wife and I helped with check-in (met a lot of great folks who were very glad to be there), and once the check-in hubbub died down, I slipped over to Chris' session.

To say his workshop was intense just doesn't cover it. I don't know what I expected, but after about a half-hour I had to go out into the hall: my brain was full. Chris was throwing out so many ideas that the atmosphere was electrically charged. I figured I would attend Wyatt's workshop, get some pointers on better rhythm playing, and then catch the last of Chris' workshop.

Wyatt first talked about his "crosspicking rhythm" style, which sounded great and looked deceptively easy. When one of the attendees asked Wyatt how long he had worked to perfect it, he answered "six or seven months, working every day." I made a mental note to purchase his video; even if I had to work for a year, that rhythm technique sounded so great it had to be worth the effort the learn. Wyatt then discussed (among other subjects) alternative chords, percussive rhythm, and chord shadings, and suddenly the two hours was over.

At the end of Wyatt's session, I was energized rather than tired. I returned to Chris' workshop as they were taking a break; Dan Miller came in to announce that Chris and Wyatt had agreed to play a little bit together. That was exciting: I could see in practice some of the subjects Wyatt had been taking about.

Again, I had no idea what to expect, but Chris and Wyatt playing together was another awesome experience. They had never played together before, but they meshed together as though they had been practicing all week, trading leads and rhythm patterns that left the listeners shaking their heads in disbelief.

After they finished, Chris began talking mandolin again. In his fifth hour of workshop, he discussed pick stroke theory and how to manage triplets, and gave listening suggestions for refining musical taste. One of his last topics was "how to solo." He used "Sally Goodin" as an example: "Basically, you've got a fiddle tune with an A drone and a five note signature." Rather than lapsing into a comfortable stable of A licks, you need to get to the heart of the tune, the signature that makes that tune unique. You then take that core and build your solo from it. That results in both a solo that people can easily recognize and one that remains true to the tune. And for each topic, Chris demonstrated exactly what he was talking about.

The workshop finally ended at 12:30AM. My head was buzzing with ideas, and even though I did make it down to hear some folks jam, I was trying to process all the information I had heard in the last six hours.

Before the sessions began on Friday morning, I first helped with breakfast for the instructors and in-class assistants, and then in setting up the *FGM* store. Then, I headed over to Jim Hurst's guitar session. Jim started by talking about his practice routine. (One of the things I noted with each instructor over the weekend was that although they might have different techniques, they were very quick to indicate that their way of doing something was not the only way of doing something, and that every guitarist needs to find a way that serves their needs.) "Start with something easy, move to something moderately difficult, and then do something difficult. Work on problem areas, and then close the practice session by doing something difficult, something moderately easy, and then something easy." Jim's point was that practice should be an experience that positively reinforces your efforts. He also talked about listening to what you play, and constantly striving to improve tone. Another point was starting with the basics: learn the tune, as simple as it may be. "It's better to play a simple tune well than a complex tune poorly," Jim said.

After an hour or so of lecture, the sessions broke into smaller workgroups, where 8-10 guitarists sat in a circle to practice some of the techniques. I sat in with the intermediate group, but had a chance to listen to what the beginner and advanced groups were doing as

well. I don't know how the banjo and mandolin sessions went, but I was really impressed with the personal attention from each of the instructors and in-class assistants. That was great!

After lunch (which received very high marks from several folks I talked with), the lecture/workshop sessions continued. I ran some errands for Dan and Mariann Miller, but made sure that I attended the Alan Bibey & Jim Hurst improvisational workshop Friday evening. Again, Jim and Alan had not played together before, but anyone would have been hard-pressed to prove it. Essentially, they combined a lecture with a mini-concert, demonstrating various improvisational techniques. Oddly (and I caught on quickly after only the first ten or twelve repetitions), the word "listening" came up again and again. Both Alan and Jim stressed that developing an awareness of the music around you only enhanced your own musical ability.

Friday evening was the first full-blown jamming opportunity, and I wandered through various hallways listening to and occasionally playing with small and large groups. There was a great spectrum of skills: folks who were just beginning and folks who were very accomplished. But what struck me was a tremendous feeling of camaraderie: everyone was there to help. When I finally got into bed at 1AM I was tired and my fingers hurt, but my brain was full of ideas.

Before Saturday morning's sessions began, I checked in to the *FGM* suite to help with breakfast. The place was packed! All of the instructors and in-class assistants were there, so I got to meet a lot of the folks who were routine *FGM* columnists, as well as some of the performers for the Saturday night concert.

Once I was through, I made a beeline for Orrin Star's morning session. I had met Orrin before through a mutual picking friend, and then taken a rhythm guitar class with him over in Charlottesville. "What Tab Doesn't Tell: The Spirit of the Tune" was Orrin's starting topic, and once again it was another session of musical epiphanies.

Orrin started by pointing out that most flatpicked tunes are, at their heart, originally dance tunes. Good fiddlers develop a tremendous sense of rhythm to supports the dancers, so as flatpickers we need to remember that rhythm. The pulse of the fiddle typically occurs on the second and fourth beat, so we need to echo that pulse in our tunes to bring them alive. If you choose to practice scales, emphasize the second and fourth beats to build up this awareness.

Another point was the strum as part of the lead. Listen (there was that word again!) to Doc Watson: he uses full and partial strums to reinforce the chord. You can also use short crosspicking riffs to take the place of a strum and build variety into your tunes. Orrin illustrated all these points by playing bits of tunes. As he played, he also remarked on how he holds the pick: loosely for strums and more tightly for flatpicking. He discussed the now-infamous rest stroke (demonstrating how Norman Blake—in the "Blakean mode"—uses it in much of his work), and proclaimed the rest stroke as the "killer app" for rhythm guitar.

As Orrin talked, something clicked in my brain. I recalled that Wyatt had discussed pick grip and thumb action, and that Chris Thile had mentioned chordal awareness as well. All of a sudden it seemed that these players were all talking about the same thing, and part of that was a severe case of listening.

After a short break, we gathered again into our guitar groups. Brad Davis was our instructor (later assisted by Steve Kilby), and he started by having everyone in turn play "Gold Rush." Uh oh. Why couldn't he have chosen "Forked Deer" or "Sally Goodin" or even "Red Haired Boy"? I mentally added "Gold Rush" to my ever-expanding list of tunes to learn and reluctantly passed when it came my time to play. Performance anxiety? Probably so, but I learned again that it was totally unnecessary. Even in that group, playing with folks I had only just met, the focus was on learning rather than judging.

And that was another of the great aspects of this weekend. I realized that most folks were there to learn, to move from where they were to a little bit better. For me, it was a great place to be, and most of the folks I talked with felt the same.

Sessions resumed after lunch. I had some tasks to complete, and took some time away from the hotel to browse downtown Roanoke. I found Fret Mill Music (one of the Weekend sponsors), and played some of their guitars. You'd think that playing almost continually for two days would be enough, but GAS is a terrible sickness. Once back at the hotel, I browsed the *FGM* shop to add a couple dozen items to my Christmas list and wandered around talking to other folks. I was lucky enough to be at the *FGM* hospitality suite when David Grier dropped by with his new Kay guitar (with the custom backside sunburst). Listening to David play, pulling tone out of a guitar that most other pickers would have walked quickly past, summed up the weekend as nothing else could have: it's never the instrument we play, but the effort we expend to make ourselves better musicians.

Saturday evening was the long-awaited concert, which met and exceeded everyone's expectations. As Master of Ceremonies, Dan Miller put together great musician combinations. Although some had not played together previously, it was difficult to tell once the musicians got on stage. Consummate professionals, they played seamlessly, forming duos and groups and trios. During the break between the first and second sets, Dan announced the winner of the Merrill Brothers' C-28 guitar. The second set opened with a quartet of superb flatpickers (the Bluegrass Weekend's answer to the four tenors) and culminated in an everybody-on-stage finale. Stupendous!

Sunday morning I had breakfast with my family before David Grier's session began. We had to drive back to Richmond that afternoon, so I knew that I could only attend David's morning session. It was all I had hoped for and more. Playing his Kay, David talked about moving onward from the basic "boom-chucka." "Control of your guitar," David began, "starts with control of tone." Listen, listen, listen. When you add a crosspicking figure to your rhythm or lead, play with it. Listen to the tonal difference between a DUDU and DDU pattern, and think which might go better with the tune. We are tempted to add flash instead of substance, but David suggests going for the substance first. Return to the masters: listen to Scruggs on guitar, or to the way Flatt backs up Scruggs on banjo.

When asked about his new Kay, David laughed and told how he found it in a music store, eventually being given it by the owner of the store who wanted it gone. "Different guitars make you think differently about the music you're making," he explained, "and they also allow you to learn what you really can and cannot do." David urged that as you practice or play, be honest. If you can't do something, accept it and work on it. "You must be in tune with your intent and your execution." He talked about having "big ears": the ability to listen and discern, which only comes from listening again and again and again to music you thought you knew. "You owe it to yourself and to those you play with to create diversity in your playing, but only after you've got the basics down," David said. To illustrate, he played a tune in Doc Watson style, and then replayed the tune in his style.

Unfortunately, about then it was time for me to check out of the hotel and drive back to Richmond. Although I had not gotten a lot of sleep over the weekend, I was still energized. All the information I had heard was buzzing around in my head. My fingers were sore, but still anxious to apply what I had heard to my everyday playing. Each instructor had provided something for me to use, and I felt all of them had given 110% to every person attending the Weekend. Worth the time, the money, the drive, the lack of sleep? Absolutely! I've already made changes in my practice sessions, and I know I will be ready at next year's Weekend when it's my turn to solo in the group, regardless of the tune!

I'd like to extend a special thanks to all the guitar instructors and in-class assistants (Jim Hurst, Richard Bennett, Brad Davis, Orrin Star, David Grier, Wyatt Rice, Steve Kilby, Bull Harmon, Scott Fore, and Dan Dingeldein) who put in lots of hours to provide high-quality content and personalized attention.

Guitar Maintenance and Repair

by Frank Ford

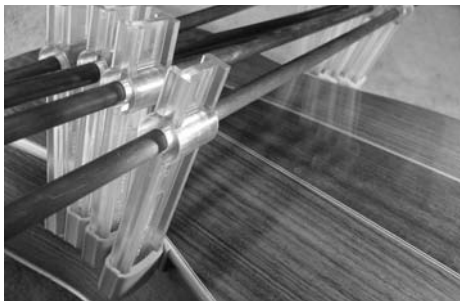
Regluing Plastic Binding

Here's a closer look at the loose binding on that D-35 from two months ago. Even a relatively simple sounding operation such as "regluing loose binding" can be full of unforeseen problems and nuances. I'm not going to get into all of them, but I will touch on enough that I think you'll have a sense of the potential situations that can arise. This is an interesting binding repair because it involved several different approaches in different areas.

Plastic binding comes loose because it shrinks with age and heat exposure. Simple as that—the plastic has volatile components that escape over time causing shrinkage and loss of flexibility. Here you can see where the body binding first shows signs of looseness. As you'd expect, it's right in the interior curve of the waist of the guitar, where the binding is under tension and is trying to take a shortcut from the lower to upper bouts:

The same thing happens on the fingerboard and peghead as well, but this particular guitar didn't have loose fingerboard binding. In general, loose fingerboard binding is the easiest to reglue. Peghead binding has such short lengths, that shrinkage is not often a problem.

Fortunately, the back binding was not so terribly shrunken and loose, so I was able to use these lightweight flexible clamps to simply stretch it and clamp it back into position, at least on the treble side:



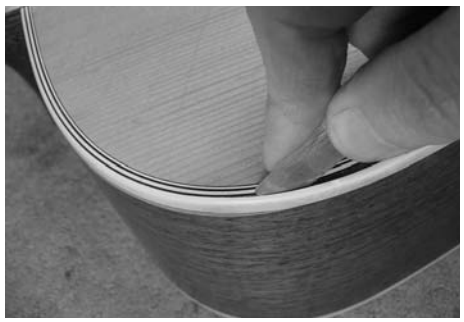
The clamp pads conform nicely to the curvature of the side and provide good clamping pressure as the glue dries. I haven't resolved the tension in the binding. I've just forced it to stretch back into position, so it's likely to come loose again, but that's probably going to be years from now. Later I'll talk about the glue I used for this part of the job. I could have heated the binding to stretch it so it could be reglued without clamping, but I don't like to do that. Heat is always a danger around guitar finishes, and I believe that heating the binding only increases the loss of volatile plasticizers, potentially shortening the life span of the plastic.

This plastic binding, common to Martin guitars from the 70s and later, is (I think) ABS plastic that goes under the trade name of Boltaron. Cellulose nitrate (ivoroid, tortoise celluloid, etc.) and other plastics undergo similar shrinkage. Martin, by the way, is very careful about the amount of solvent glue used in adhering binding, so while it is more likely to come loose, the binding is less likely to decompose, and less likely to cause damage to the wood parts as it shrinks. Additionally, Martin binding is relatively easier to remove for other kinds of structural disassembly than binding which was really dosed with glue. I won't mention the large "notorious" makers who do that.

Someone else beat me to the bass side, and reglued the binding, actually breaking it in the process. It's possible that it was much more loose than the treble side back binding, or that the owner snagged the binding while it was loose, breaking it. In any case, you can see the extent of the shrinkage:

Bear in mind that this little gap is the result of shrinkage just on the waist portion of the body. On some instruments (again, NOT Martins or most other Martin-style guitars) the binding is so tightly adhered all around and the finish is so thick and brittle it simply isn't practical to try to remove the binding, so it may be logical to cut the binding on an interior curve to reglue it. Then, as above, it becomes necessary to fill little gaps.

The top binding was WAY loose! In fact, the top inside purfling was loose, too. As often, the side purfling remained glued in place, probably because it is so thin it could handle the stress of shrinkage. I set about loosening the top binding all around, so I could relieve the stress and reglue the binding and purfling successfully:



It's a slow process, working with my thinnest blade to lift the binding gently away, working from the loose area up toward the neck. With sufficient care and a bit of good luck, I can sometimes pull the binding loose from under the fingerboard:

Well, sometimes, but not always:

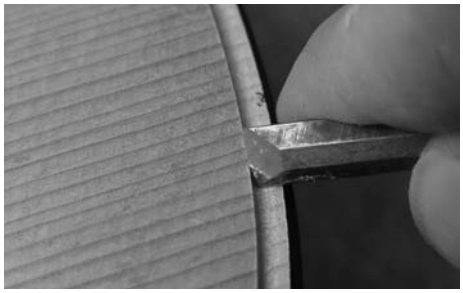
As you can see the binding broke right at the neck. Oh well, there's always the other side. I have to try both sides, because most of the time the total shrinkage is more than the amount of binding stuck under only one edge of the fingerboard. I wouldn't expect to be able to do this trick on a guitar made by any other major factory, except possibly Taylor, although there aren't enough old Taylors yet, so I haven't been seeing much loose Taylor binding.

Same deal, treble side:

OK, now that's the way it's supposed to work.

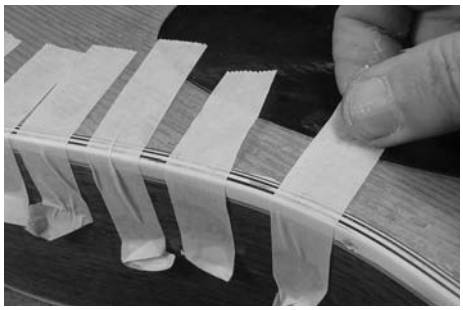
If you remember my piece on regluing old Martin pickguards, you may recall this next bit. On the glued surface of the binding there are lots of wood fibers still attached, and a very rough surface indeed. I can take advantage of this situation and use regular water-soluble wood glue to re-adhere the binding to the wood, as I did in the waist area of the back binding of this D-35. Then, when the glue is dry I can simply wash off any excess with water, avoiding any injury to the finish. I'd have to take extraordinary precautions and probably do a bunch of finish touch up if I used the original solvent based glue Martin used before the guitar was lacquered.

My sharpest little chisel is the perfect tool to clean up the channel where the binding will lay:



I scrape it clean so there won't be little fibers sticking up to make it difficult for the binding to "seat" in place. A bit of good old carpenters wood glue:

And some nice tight masking tape to hold the binding while the glue dries:

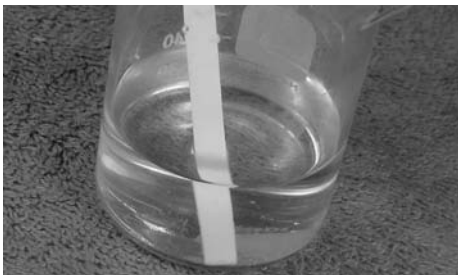


This is a surprisingly effective technique for regluing binding. For example, the yellow carpenter's wood glue has held perfectly well on the binding I reglued on my 1923 Gibson mandolin 31 years ago.

Speaking of old stuff, I try to keep a variety of old bits and pieces of binding for patching missing binding and purfling. It's a big old tangle in a big old box on the shelf:

It does come in handy, though.

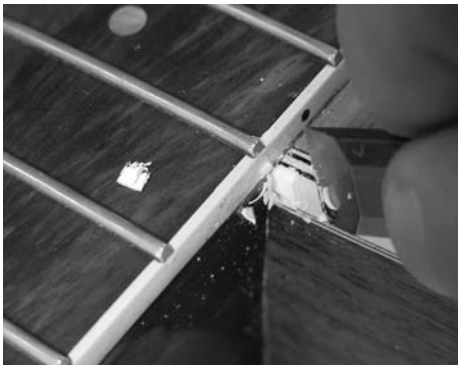
To patch that little missing section on the back edge of the D-35, I needed a bit of matching "body putty" so I dunked a piece of appropriate binding into some acetone to soften the surface:



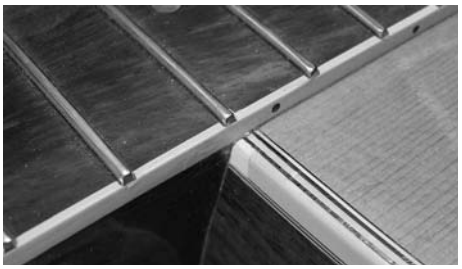
Within a few moments, enough of the surface had been dissolved so I was able to scrape off a bit of nice gooey paste. Just the thing to fill that narrow gap. Now, there's a lot of solvent in this putty, so I had to let it dry for about a week before leveling it out.

Here, I'm using a bit of the same binding material and a bit of that dissolved binding to "weld" a patch into the area where I broke the binding away from the fingerboard:

Then, after waiting the requisite week for drying and shrinkage to occur, I was able to take my chisel and level the patch with the surrounding surface:



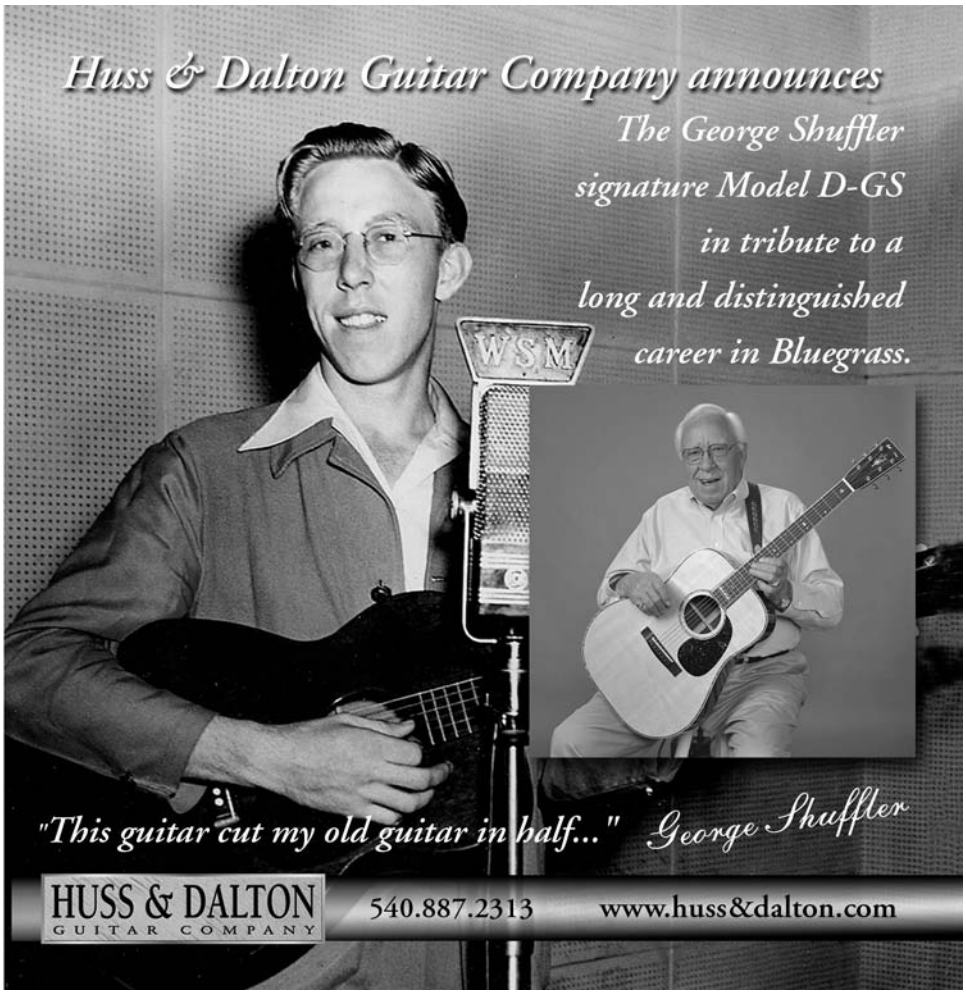
My new binding patch looks whiter because it doesn't have any finish on top of it:



Of course, there's a clear lacquer finish on most of this guitar's binding, and over the years it has aged to a nice amber tone.

I keep a bottle of lacquer on my garage roof, allowing it to get a "suntan" from UV exposure. Then, I always have some pre-aged finish for this kind of small touchup. This little piece of binding is so small that a brush makes the most sense for touchup. There's no overspray mess, and it will be no problem to sand the finish level and polish it to look good.

I haven't addressed regluing the fingerboard binding, in spite of the fact that it's the most likely to come loose in normal use. I suspect warmth from handling causes the fingerboard binding to shrink a bit sooner than the body binding, if the guitar isn't "cooked" in a hot car the way this one was. In fact, the fingerboard binding was fully glued even though there was so much heat damage over the rest of the guitar. Go figure. Maybe the binding had been a bit better glued in the first place. At any rate, the regluing of fingerboard binding is pretty much the same experience as regluing body binding, so there's no real need to go into that for this article, except to say that removing and regluing fingerboard binding almost always leaves the binding a bit short at the nut. If it's a tiny gap, it might not be too offensive looking and may be left without filling, depending on the player's taste.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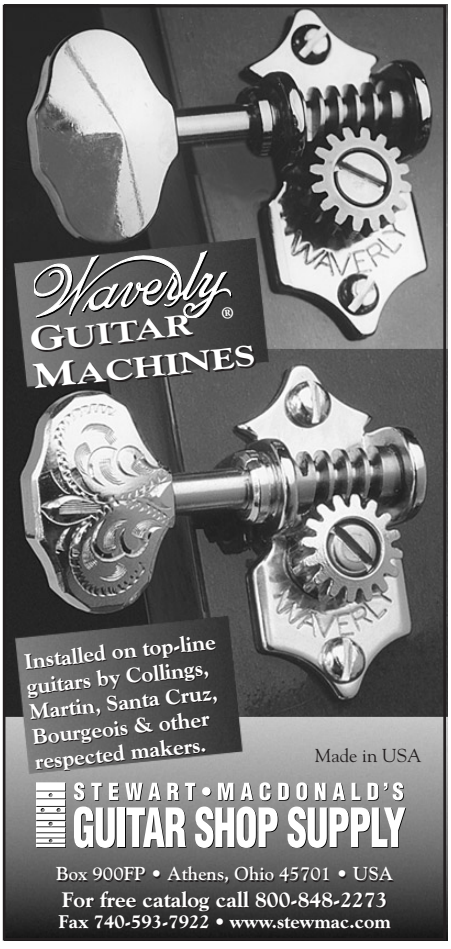
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Flatpicking & Folk/Acoustic Rock

by John Tindel

Doolin' Dalton

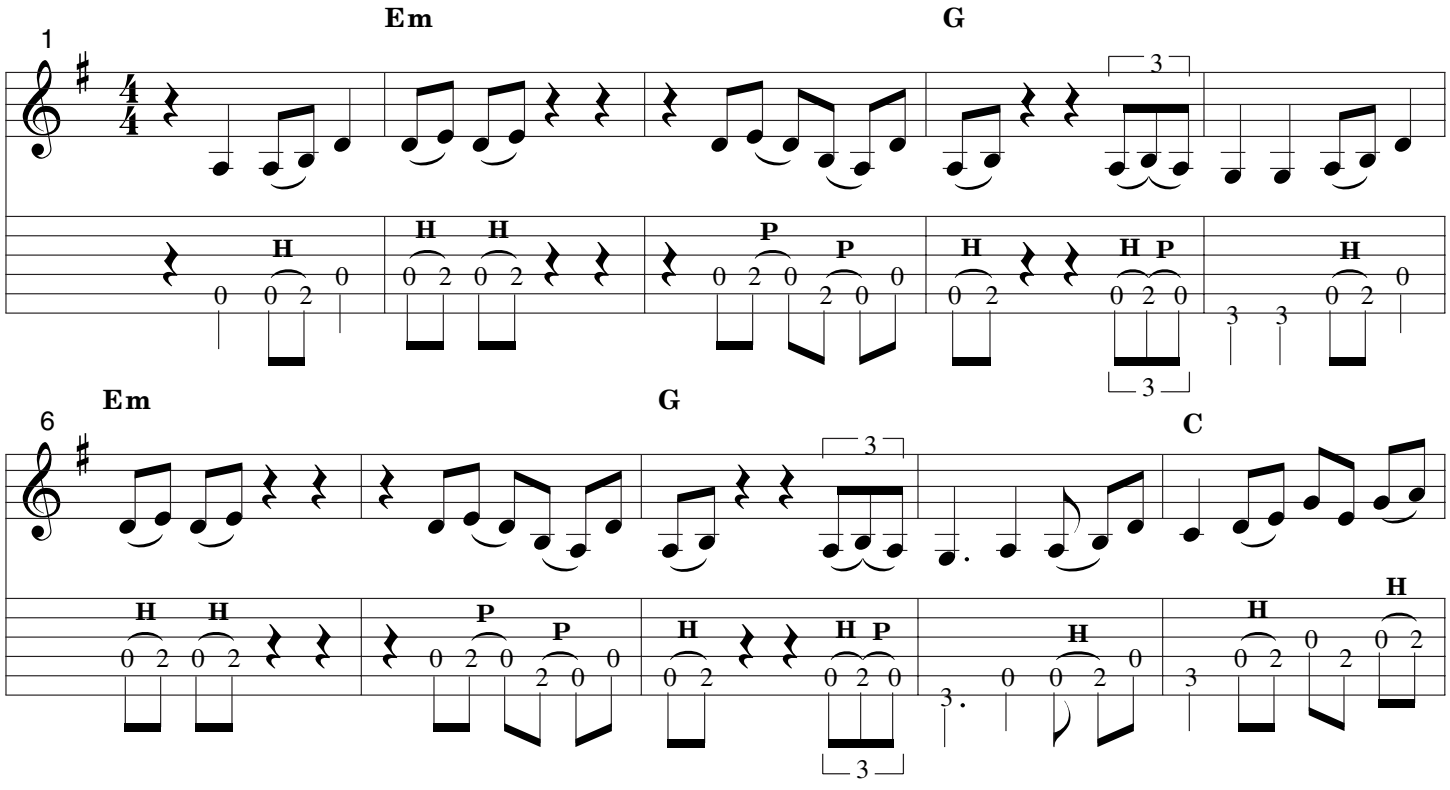
1973 will always be a special year for me. It's the year I graduated from high school and ventured out into the big ol' world as an "adult." The other important thing was the Eagles release of their *Desperado* album. Okay, so a couple of other important things may have happened, I think. Anyway, this southern California band, considered in some circles to be the "American Beatles," are undoubtedly a big influence on popular music, especially evident in a lot of the mainstream Nashville fare you hear these days. This record, although made in England by an English producer, is a surprisingly acoustic,bluegrassy, country sounding song cycle that would almost be considered "Americana" today.

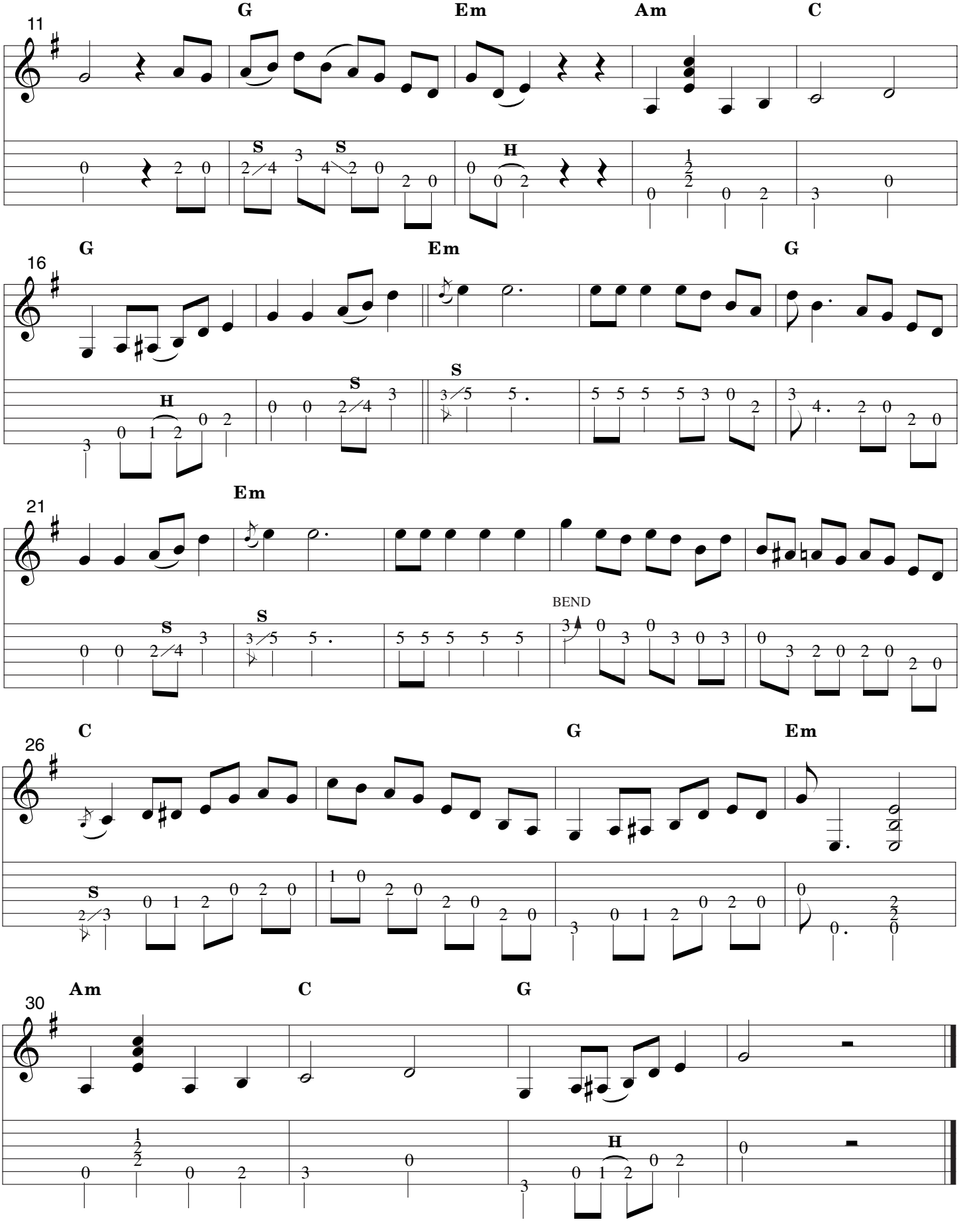
Perhaps best known for its two hits ("Desperado" and the ubiquitous "Tequila Sunrise"), the outlaw thread that runs through the whole record is the saga of the Dalton gang, as told in the opening and closing songs,"Doolin' Dalton," and "Doolin' Dalton (reprise)." Eagles Don Henley and Glen Frey cowrote this with up and coming LA songwriters J.D. Souther and Jackson Browne. There's also a tasty little flatpicked rendition tucked into be middle of the album that we'll be looking at here.

It's a fairly straightforward little melody, played first on the low strings and then an octave higher with some embellishments added. I didn't tab out all the fancy little inferences but it's all there on the CD. Depending on the tempo that you play it, it's only a minute or so long; you might loop it and take turns with a partner improvising around the basic melody in a jam setting. When you want to end it, go to the A minor walkup progression that ends with the E major and the fast triplets. I hope you enjoy this little flatpicked gem from the Golden days of a country/rock band from LA having fun with their bluegrass roots a little bit before they eventually defined the genre of LA country/rock.

Doolin' Dalton

Arranged by John Tindal



Doolin' Dalton (con't)

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STRINGED INSTRUMENTS

Kaufman's Corner

by Steve Kaufman

Whistlin' Ruffus

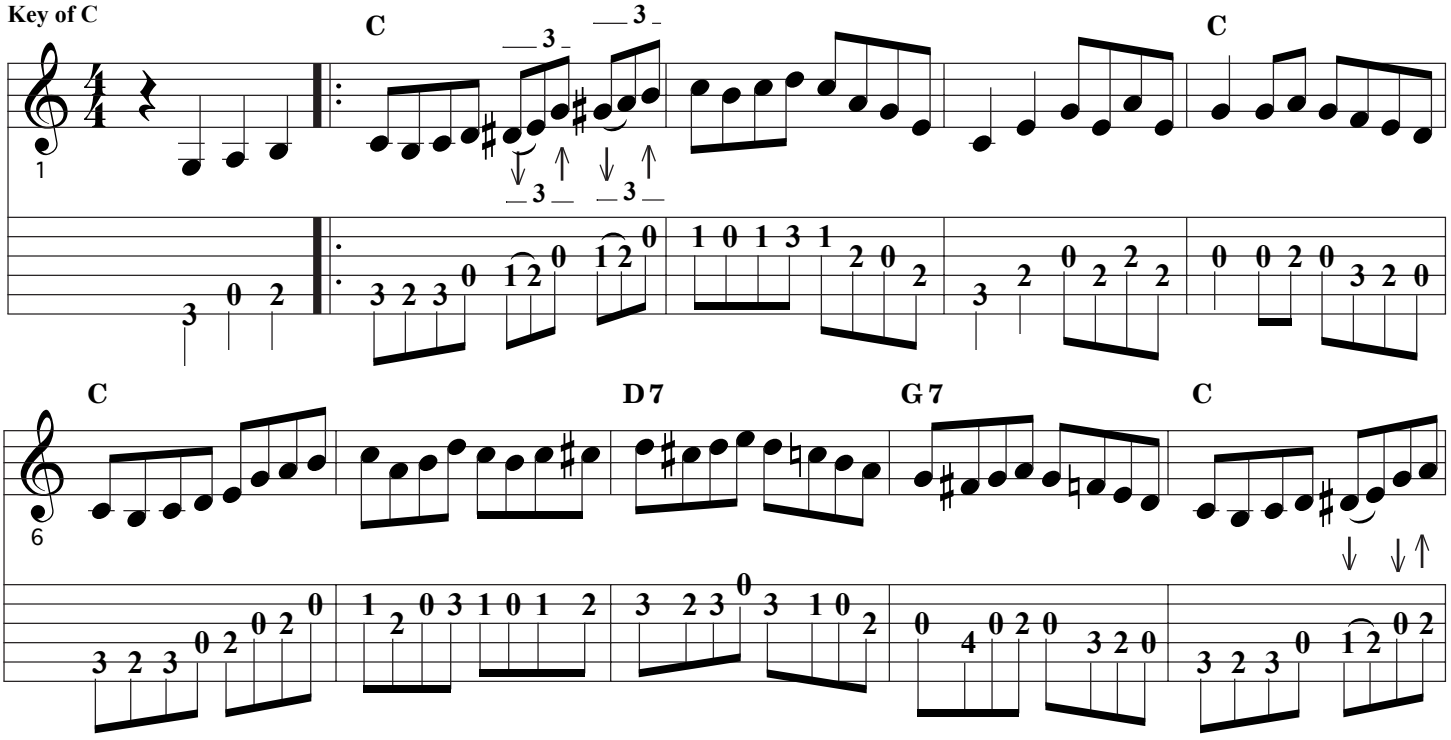
Hi friends and welcome back! This tune was taught to me by two of my greatest influences Red Rector and Doc Watson. With Red, I would play it in both C and G. It's probably done more with fiddles and mandos in G but Doc recorded it in C pos. so most guitarists play it there. The first measure has a pair of hammer-on triplets: hammer-on the first note and hit it with a down swing and hit the last note of each triplet is hit with an up swing.

Measure 4: When hitting notes on the same fret on two adjacent strings try to avoid using the same finger but rather work it out to use 2 fingers. When you use one finger the tendency is to mute out or kill off one of the notes and this will sound choppy.

Measures 14-16 are pretty neat because of their syncopated sound. You will need to hold the F chord notes and hit the D note with the 4th finger (LH). Hold the last two fingers of the C chord for the next measure and use the index finger (LH) to grab the A note. There are a lot of really neat things going on in this arrangement. Study it and don't let them foul you up. Now get to it and watch the arrows!!!

Whistlin' Ruffus

Arranged by Steve Kaufman



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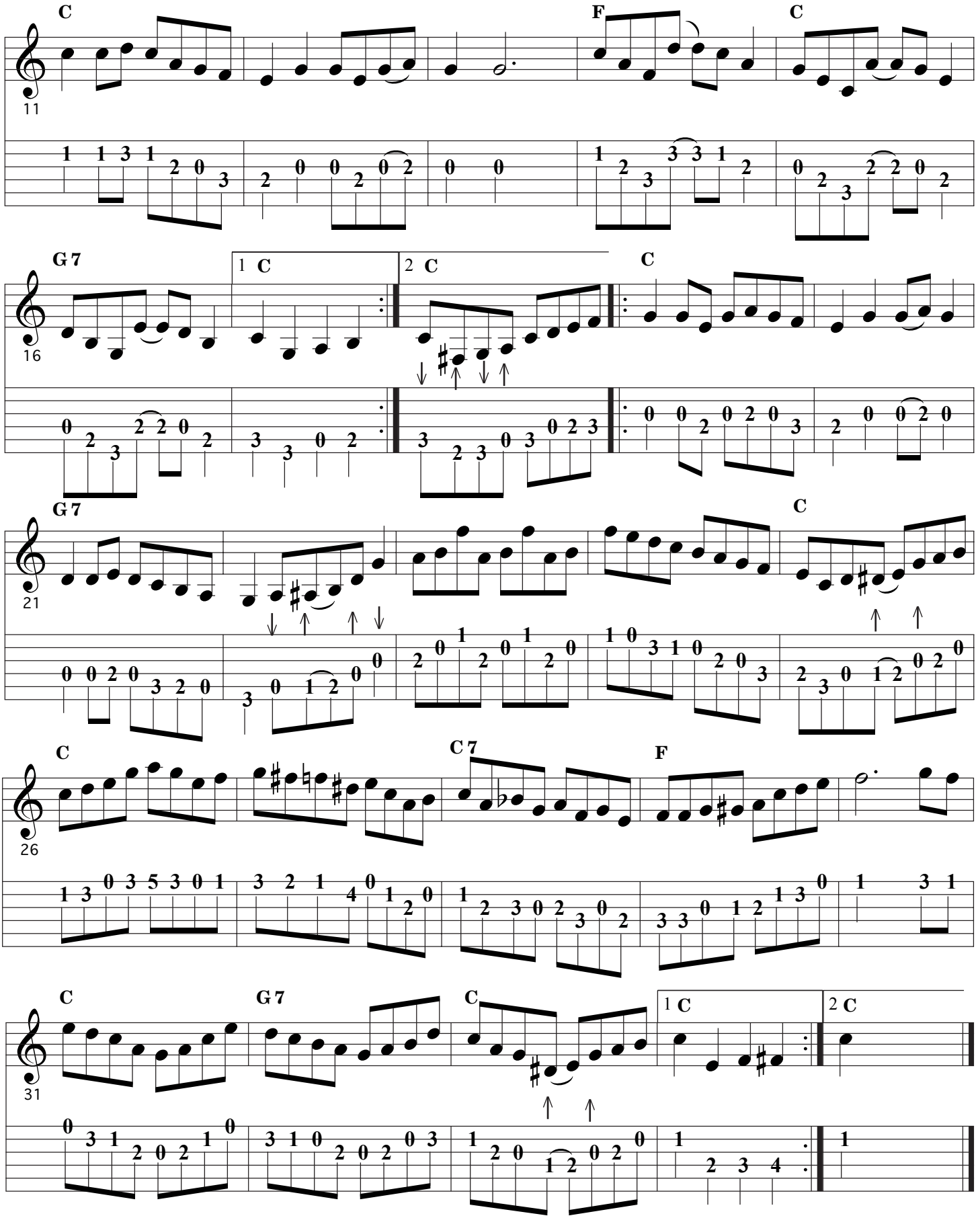
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Adventures in Acoustic Music:
Fighting Back!

by John Carlini

These are difficult times. The world has changed for us here at home. You might say that the paradigm has been rearranged. We hurt. What can we do...as individuals?...As guitar players? I've been asking myself that. Here's what I've discovered.

The old line that goes, "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?," still applies. That paradigm will never change. You practice. You improve. You keep on going. Stay on track. Focus on the good stuff. Hey! My "key of the week" is E. I can start there!

We recently lost the great violinist Isaac Stern. Mr. Stern was a champion of the aforementioned Carnegie Hall and had a long history of performing there. Here is a great Isaac Stern quote. "I have been practicing the violin eight hours a day my whole life and they call me a genius!"

Back to the key of E: Ex. 1 is an E Major three-octave arpeggio. It's a great way to start the day! As always, get out your trusty metronome, set it for a slow tempo and play one note per click. (That is, after you've memorized the thing which should take about 10 minutes.) Listen. Alternate your picking, "down/up." Let the metronome be in charge. Sync up with it. Are you comfortable yet? Good. Increase to two notes per click! New problems become evident. Work through them. Comfortable? Good. Go to three notes per click! The big challenge is five npc!

Ex. 2 is an E Major three-octave scale. In looking at this scale, bear in mind that there are lots of possible fingerings for a scale. After all, the guitar fingerboard is a maze-like grid with lots of paths. This particular fingering provides a workout for the third finger in going from C# to D# on the 5th string. It also contains a nice leap from B (4th finger) to C# (1st finger) on the 1st string. Lots of fun! Again, use your metronome. Not only will that help discipline your sense of time, it will also give you a "point" on which to focus. Scales and arpeggios are not music. They are technique builders. Want some inspiration? Listen to the words of Andres Segovia! "The practice of scales enables one to solve a greater number of technical problems in a shorter time than the study of any other exercise." "Amen!" seems appropriate here.

So. This can be your warm-up. Ten minutes spent on each exercise based on a consistent schedule will produce results.

How does this activity compare to the heroes and the bravest among us who rush in when everyone else is rushing out? It doesn't. It's just "what we do." Music in its purest form speaks to the spirit. Listen to the solo voice of Ralph Stanley, the solo mandolin of Bill Monroe, the solo sax of John Coltrane, the solo voice of Luciano Pavarotti, and so on. That is why we practice. It's about being ready to get in touch with that music essence to the best of our ability.

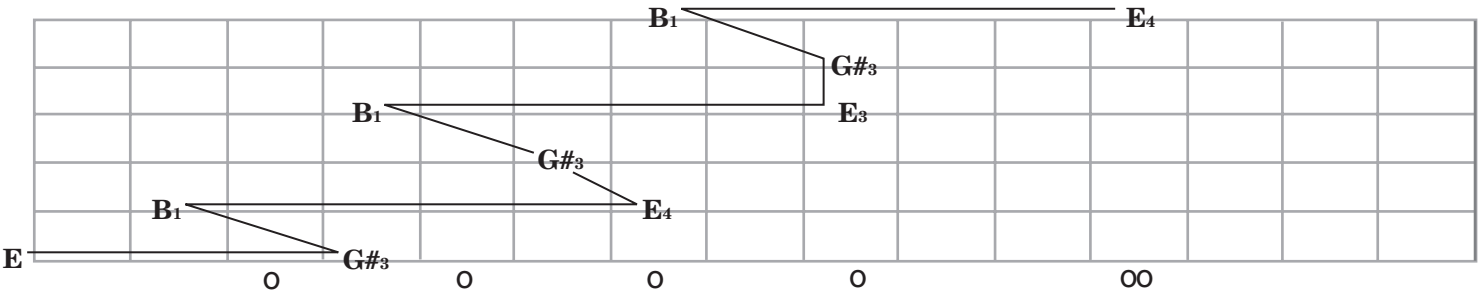
Recently I received an e-mail from a great musician and bass player, Greg Cohen. I want to share his thoughts with you. "I feel the need to continue my work and not bow to the hand of terrorism. I feel so lucky to have music and our musical family as a part of my life. It is the energy unit within me right now. It focuses me and steps on the gas for me." I thought that said it all.

Now here's the pay-off. Remember the "Riceolian Mode" we worked with a few issues back? Here it is in the key of E, mapped out on the fingerboard!

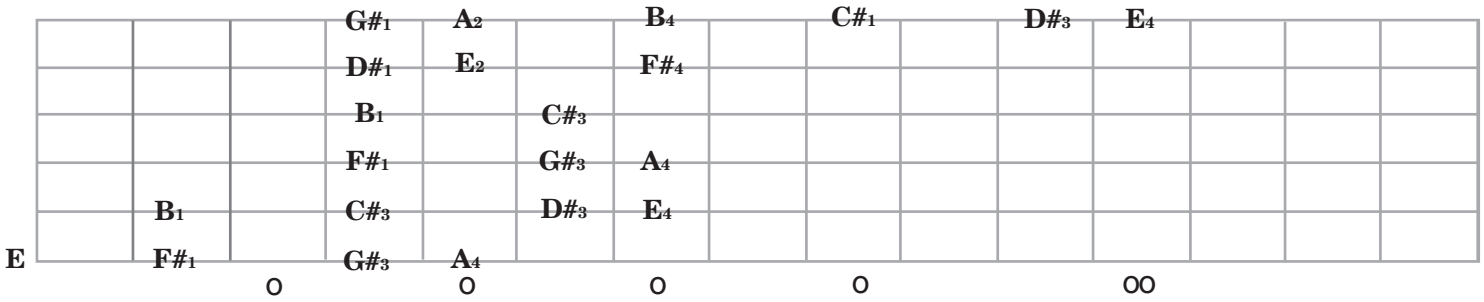
To capture that T Rice sound, try hammering-on the (G)s up to G#s, and pulling-off the (Bb)s to As. Experiment. A good "comfort zone" is out of position VII, that is, with the index finger on the 7th fret E on the 5th string.

Fight terrorism with bluegrass! Step on the gas!

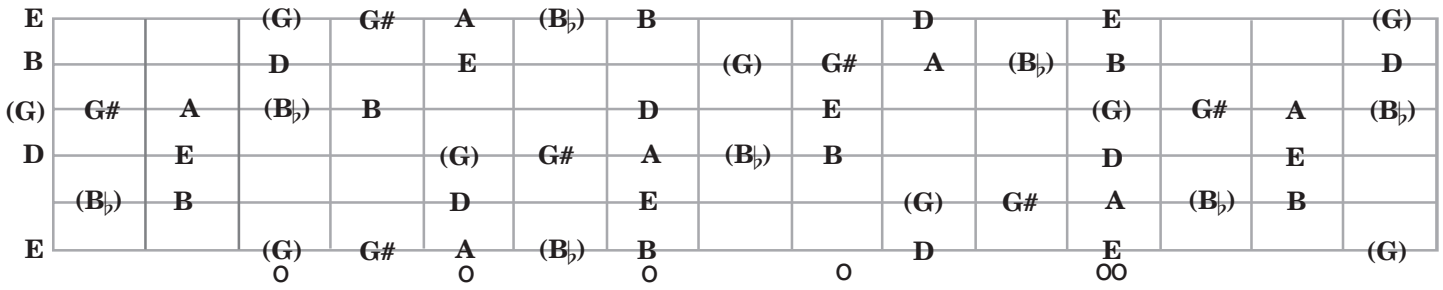
Example 1: E Major Arpeggio



Example 2: E Major Scale



Example 3: Riceolian Mode - Key of E



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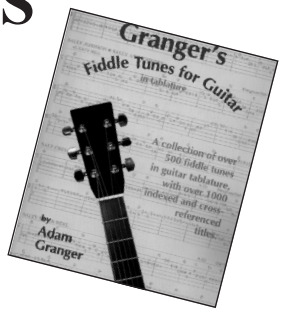
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Flatpick Profile:

Scott Fore

by Dan Miller

The southwestern region of the state of Virginia has always been rich in old-time and bluegrass music. From the Carter Family, to the Stanley Brothers, to today's top pickers—Dan Tyminski, Kenny Smith, Wyatt Rice, Wayne Henderson, to name just a few—southwest Virginia has always produced great acoustic musicians. As one local man told me, "You shake a tree around here and a bluegrass band falls out."

Although many of the region's pickers have pursued music as a full-time profession and have gone on to national prominence and fame, there are many other great players in the area who just pick for fun. Wayne Henderson, a rural mail carrier in Rugby, Virginia, recorded a tremendous CD several years back where all of the players on his project were local professional people who simply play music as a hobby. Wayne knows them all from the jam sessions he hosts at his home. That recording was evidence that in southwest Virginia there are many local "hobbyists" who are good enough to hang with the pros.

One of the local flatpickers who can frequently be seen jamming down at Wayne Henderson's is Scott Fore, a forty-one year old accountant from Radford, Virginia. Although his name has been known for years among pickers in the region, Scott's name was not well known in national flatpicking circles until he decided to compete at the 2000 National Flatpicking Championships held at the Walnut Valley Festival in Winfield, Kansas. It was Scott's first trip to Winfield and he brought home the second place prize. Not bad for a local boy!

Scott is also an outstanding guitar teacher, having as many as 80 students a week during his peak teaching years, he has taught many local pickers how to improve their flatpicking skills. For the past two years, he has been a favorite with students at the Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend. Many of the Roanoke attendees have approached me saying, "That Scott Fore is a great player. I got a lot out of my session with him. When are you going to feature him in the magazine?" If you are one of the individuals asking that question, then you've turned to the right page.

Scott Fore grew up in Washington and Wythe Counties, in Virginia. His grandmother and her brothers played music in the 30s. Scott became interested in playing music when he was nine years old. Seeing guitars hanging by fishing line from the ceiling of Rose's department store fueled his desire to play. His parents bought him one of the cheap guitars, but it was difficult to play and his interest waned until he was fifteen and discovered a neighbor's electric guitar.

Scott's interest in his neighbor's electric guitar led to his parents buying him a better guitar. Scott says, "I got the bug really bad. I played eight hours a day." Scott enjoyed all kinds of music and began learning how to play everything from Peter, Paul, and Mary to the Eagles and Deep Purple. In 1977 he was living in Wytheville, Virginia, and heard a broadcast of the National Flatpicking Guitar Championship on public radio. A contestant stepped up to the microphone and ripped off a dazzling version of "Blackberry Blossom," to which Scott responded, "I want to learn how to play that!"

Unable to find a local guitar teacher to give him flatpicking instruction, Scott began hanging out at the local fiddler's conventions. Scott says, "Back then you could find a fiddler's convention almost every weekend. We would sit down in pairs and show each other what we knew. I would learn something from others and I would show them things that I had come up with." In addition to swapping tunes at fiddler's conventions Scott said, "I learned from books, magazines, and anywhere else I could. I actually learned about barre chords from watching a Bobby Goldsboro television show."

After graduating from high school in 1978, Scott and a friend took a trip to Europe and made money by picking in the subways with a couple of musicians they met in France. While in Paris they met a Frenchman who owned a record company and recorded an album for his label. As exciting as it was to be a nineteen-year-old with a record album out in Europe, Scott didn't let it go to his head. He came back home and went to college, studying biology and accounting. Although he did take some music theory courses in college, the accounting degree seemed like a more practical professional pursuit.

Since graduating college, Scott has worked full-time as an accountant and part-time as a musician. A fan of all styles of music, he has played in country bands, big bands, swing bands, bluegrass bands, and jazz combos. Scott also works as a sound engineer at professional shows and events such as the National Folk Festival. He has competed in and won numerous guitar contests.

Scott began pursuing guitar contests when he was a teenager attending fiddler's conventions. After band work and session work began to come his way, he stopped entering contests but in recent years has gone back to them. After more than ten year's absence from contests, I wondered what prompted Scott to return. He says, "I am not in a band right now because I have obligations to my job and my family, so the

contests provide a focus for my practice time. If I wasn't preparing for contests I would just be sitting on the couch and picking without an objective. I find that I progress more when I have an objective and contest preparation provides that for me right now." Scott adds, "Once you start competing, just like a runner who likes to race, you get an adrenaline rush during the contest and you find that you want to do it again. I've found that this is one of the things that keeps me going back. Plus there are some great guitars to be won!" I suppose that winning a Henderson guitar at Wayne Henderson's contest in 1999 and a Collings D2H at Winfield in 2000, as Scott has done, would provide anyone with the motivation to enter more contests.

Scott looks at contests as a learning experience. He sees them as an opportunity to analyze his playing and he lets the contest preparation push him in practice. He says, "Preparing for a contest gives me a reason to workup new songs and new arrangements." Contest playing also gives Scott a chance to work on the technical aspects of his playing to which he might not otherwise attend. He says, "When I am in a contest I play much differently than when I am playing a show. With a contest arrangement I try to put in more technical tricks. I may not do that if the arrangement were just for performance. But the technical skills that I focus on when preparing for a contest carry over to the non-contest environment and, I think, help my overall skill as a guitar player."

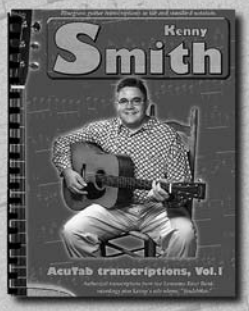
Knowing that Scott has taught many students over the years, I asked him what problems he encountered most frequently with students who wanted to learn how to flatpick. Scott said, "Outside of timing, most are missing good right hand technique." When asked what he does as a teacher to correct the problem, Scott says, "I show them my right hand technique as well as other alternatives."

Listening to Scott play, it is evident that he has a very strong right hand. His notes are clear, distinct, and powerful, even at high speeds. He achieves this by using a right hand technique that he calls "circle picking." Scott says, "It is a technique that some jazz and blues guys use. It is all about economy of motion. When you attack the string you do not pluck it, but you push through it. The pick attack is not flat; it is at a forward-tilting angle. The string rides the edge of the pick until it reaches a point where it leaps off. You do the same thing when you are pulling up for the up stroke. I find that this technique gives me more power and gives the down-strokes and up-strokes equal volume. It is called 'circle picking' because the tip of the pick traces a small circle as you move through the motion. The tip does not move linearly back and forth."

Scott says that he developed the "circle picking" technique on his own, but later found a book called *Right Hand Development for Jazz* which offered a similar method. The circular motion of the pick tip is executed by small movements of the thumb joint in combination with the index finger. On the down-stroke the thumb joint bends down and pushes the pick through the string. Think of pushing hard on a surface with your thumb. On the up-stroke, the thumb joint pulls back up and the index finger lifts the pick through the string. Scott says that his right hand floats when he is playing. In other words, the hand does not need to "anchor" to the top of the guitar for stability.

In addition to teaching guitar lessons, Scott has also taken lessons in recent

Acutab Guitar



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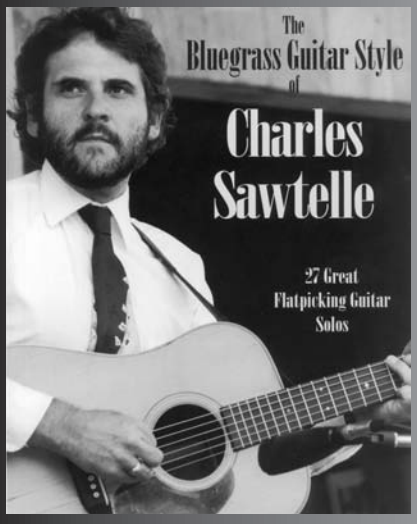
years with Kenny Smith and Jim Hurst. I was curious to know why someone with Scott's expertise and experience is still seeking lessons. He said, "I am after the subtle things that they do. When guys play professionally every night, something changes in their playing. They may not even be aware of the change. But there are small things that I notice in their attack--the way they keep strings ringing, the way they are able to give each note its full value, the way they work around chord shapes, the way they can get a fuller sound out of their instrument. When I meet with someone like Kenny or Jim for a lesson I jam with them and try to just soak up and absorb what they are doing. With a guy like Kenny I might ask him to play a tune like 'Forked Deer' and observe how he approaches the song. With Jim, I like to look at his improvisational ideas and watch the way he plays rhythm."

Scott Fore is an accomplished player with over twenty years of experience. He teaches others, but also realizes that he still has things to learn. Playing in contests, and learning from some of the top professionals, keep his skills sharp and insures that he continues to learn and grow as a player. With a second place finish at Winfield in 2000 and a top five finish in 2001, it will only be a matter of time before that first place Winfield trophy and guitar is his to own.

On the next two pages we have transcribed one of Scott's solos to "Ragtime Annie." The transcription that you are provided here is the second solo arrangement of the recording that appears on the companion audio for this issue.

Scott provided his own transcription of this solo and sent along some performance notes. He says, "The song is played from the C position with the capo on the 2nd fret. The fret indications are for the open C position and the same relationship would be maintained when using the capo.

Let the notes ring as long as possible. The tempos is MM 236. I usually set the metronome to ♩= 118 and play the notes as 32nd notes. I chose to write the tab in 8ths to make it easier to read."



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Ragtime Annie

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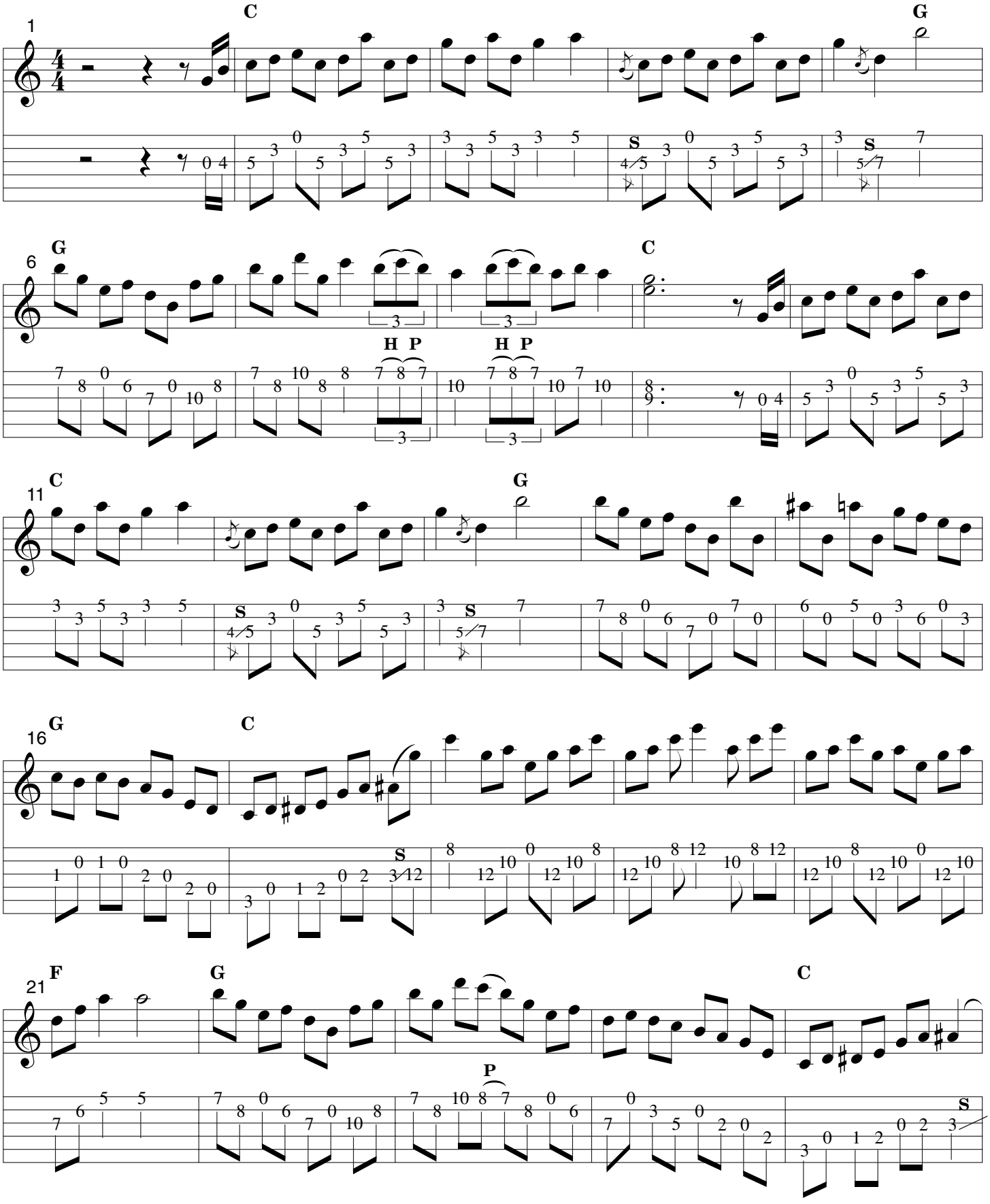
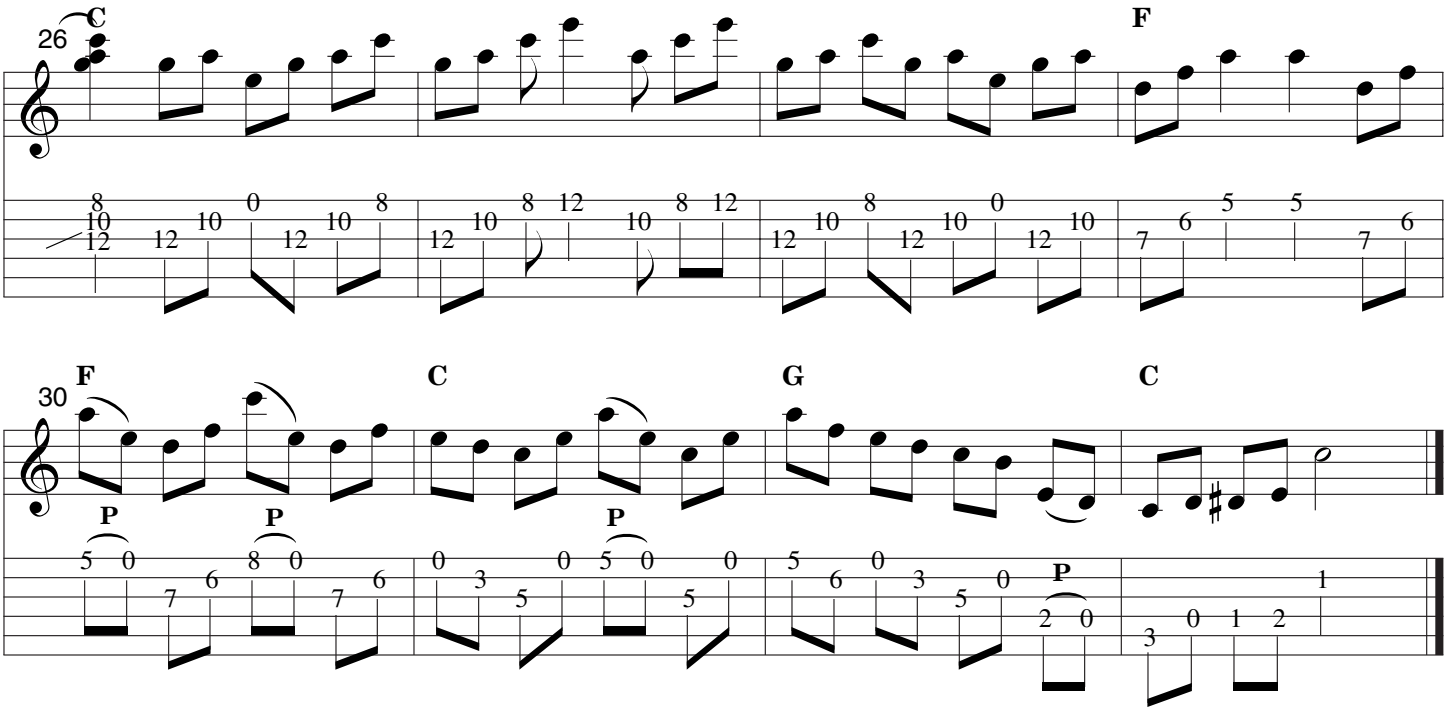

Ragtime Annie (con't)



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NASHVILLE FLATTOP

By Brad Davis

"Salt Creek" Fast

"Salt Creek" has always been one of my favorite tunes. I recently recorded "Salt Creek" when we filmed the *Flatpick Jam: Volume One* video and I learned some things about the way I approach solos played at different tempos. On the video I play each song at four different tempos ranging from slow, to slow/medium, to medium/fast, to fast. In this issue I have transcribed the fast tempo solo that I took on "Salt Creek" to demonstrate something about the usefulness of note and phrase repetition

Within any given solo, I like to take the listener to both high and low note registers. I will usually try to arrange a of flow of notes around the melody and then periodically repeat a familiar phrase in order to punctuate the central phrase or theme of the tune. The repetition not only brings the listener back to the strongest theme of the song, but it gives the listener's ear something familiar to latch onto. A flowing stream of notes is fine, but if that is all you provide, the listener is going to get tired. The repetition of a theme allows the listener to breath a little before the next sequence starts. In this arrangement of "Salt Creek" you'll notice several phrases I have repeated in the A section, especially the phrase in the 2nd, 6th, 10th, 14th, and 18th measures. This is a defining phrase in this tune and no matter where you go in between, this phrase will bring the listener back to "Salt Creek."

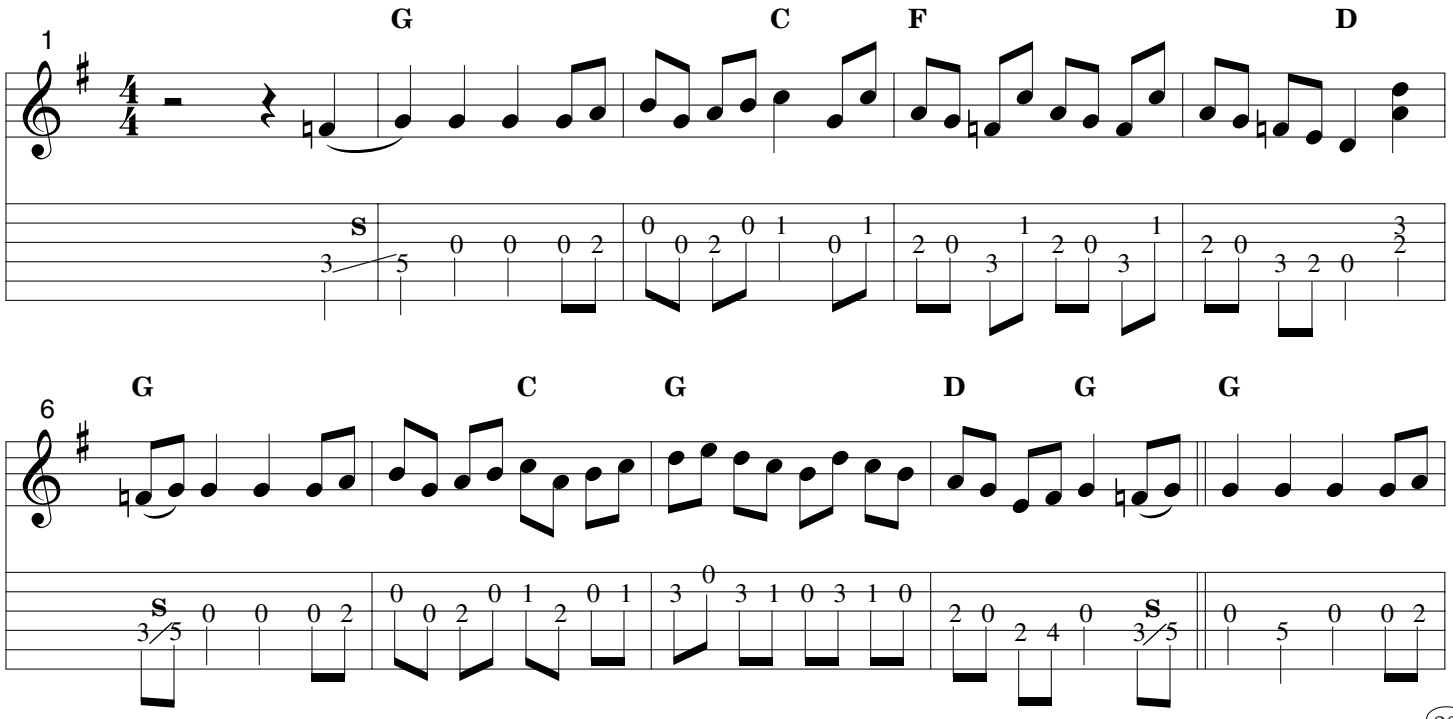
Repetition can be dangerous if overused because, let's face it, it is repetitive! Sometimes, however, you can use note repetition without repeating exactly the same thing over and over. I demonstrate this idea starting with the last two notes in measure 22 and going through measure 24. In this section of the tune, I don't repeat exact phrases or licks, however, if you look closely at those measures you will notice repetition of certain notes on the G and B strings. This note repetition forms a phrase which is then repeated on the D and G strings in a similar fashion. Use of these kind of patterns is another way to lead the listener's ear.

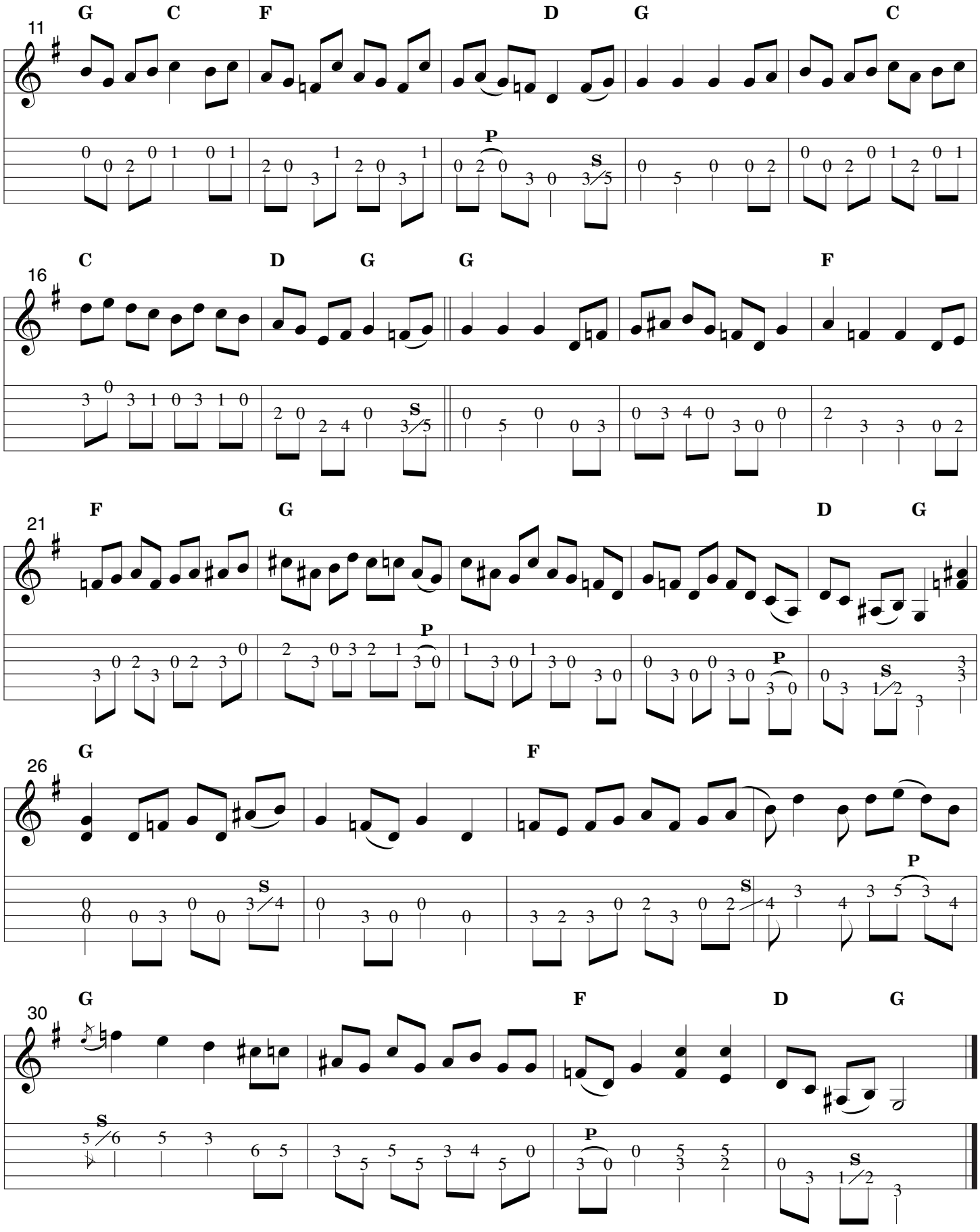
In summary, repetition helps you do four things:

1) Gives your mind time to think of where to go next.
2) Gives the listener a familiar phrase or set of notes.
3) Creates a "neutral section" in your solo, what I refer to as a "pause area."
4) Makes it easier on you in a very fast solo because you tend to repeat the phrases that are most familiar to you.

Salt Creek

Arranged by Brad Davis



Salt Creek (con't)

Break Time

by Chris Jones

Break Intros

We've dealt with the important issue of finding and improvising on the melody quite a bit in previous columns. Sometimes, though, just getting started on the break and leading into that first note of the melody can be a challenge.

Step one then is to have some kind of an intro or kickoff lick to begin with. Actually, step one is to have a guitar in your possession, a pick in your right hand and some idea of what key you're playing in. If you've fulfilled the above requirements, then you can begin worrying about your intro. Some guitar players have a fair amount of break-playing experience but may get into ruts in the way they start their breaks. For these pickers, some thinking about break intros is useful to vary their approach a little.

To begin with, I like to separate the intros according to what note they're leading into. If we're in the key of G and the first main note of the song is a G, I would call this a "1" intro. If we're leading into a B note I'd call it a "3" because it's the 3 note of the G scale. If we're heading to a D note I would call it (you guessed it) a "5" intro. Sorry, but those of you that guessed that it should be called "Delilah" will have to stay after class.

In the tabs that follow, I have written out three "3" intros, three "1" intros, followed by two each of high and low "5" intros. Here are a few points about these tabs to take note of:

The first point is that they're very short, but they still took me a long time to write because I'm borderline tab-illiterate. Next you'll notice that the melody note we're leading to is always landing on the first beat of the second measure.

You may also note that I use either a slide, hammer-on, and/or double stop for this melody note in every case (I used slides quite a bit because I'm partial to them, but in some cases you can substitute a hammer-on). The reason for this is to give this note some additional presence, because it's pretty important and needs to be stated with good tone and authority. The same can be said for the whole intro to your break. You need to let people know that you're there (particularly the person who mistakenly thinks that it's his/her break and has started playing it). Still, the greatest punch and emphasis should be saved for that first note of measure #2.

You'll see too that there is a pretty common pattern of leading up to the first melody note, but in a few cases (see example #3 and #8) I deliberately worked down to the note to break out of that pattern.

Some of the intros are similar to each other (#1 and #5), but differ subtly and end up in a different place.

A few details: Example #6 works well when played right out of the G chord formation that uses the third and fourth fingers on the first and second strings ("that there modern G chord"). In example # 8, it's nice to let the last note of the first measure continue to ring while you play the slide on the second string.

By the way, I used only the key of G for this issue to give as much variety within that key as possible. I'm aware that there are other keys that we play in (at least one that I know of) and I'll give some examples for those keys in the future.

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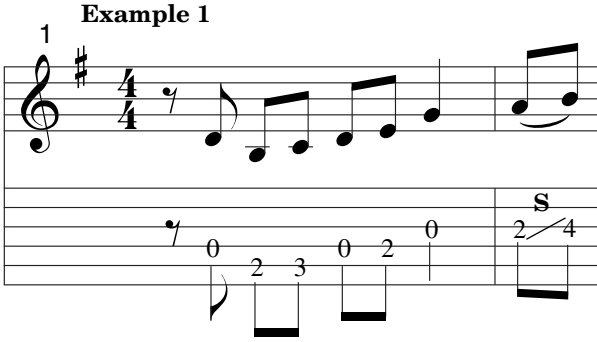

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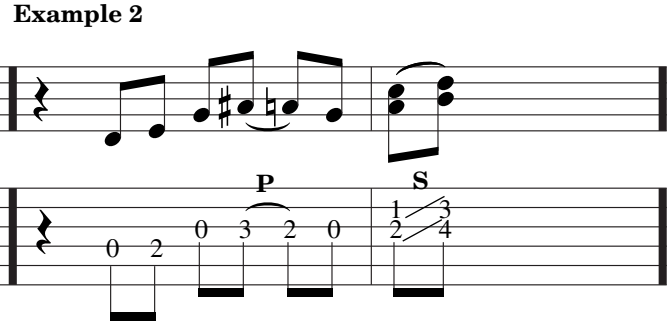

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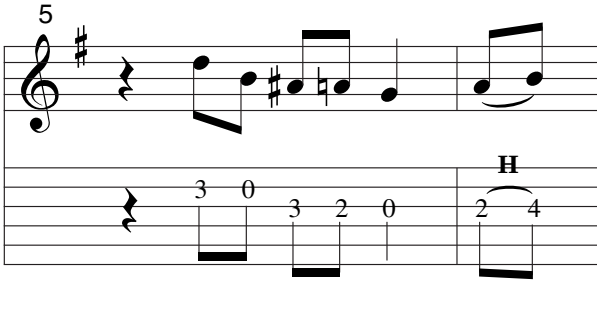

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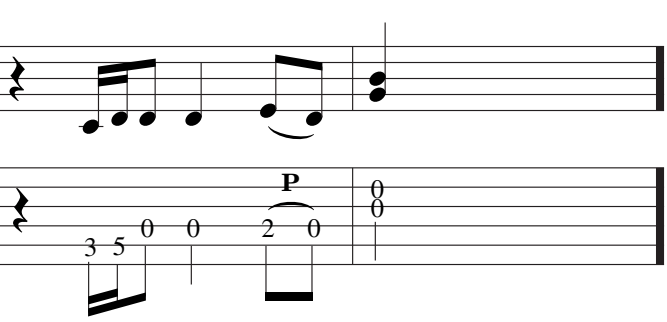

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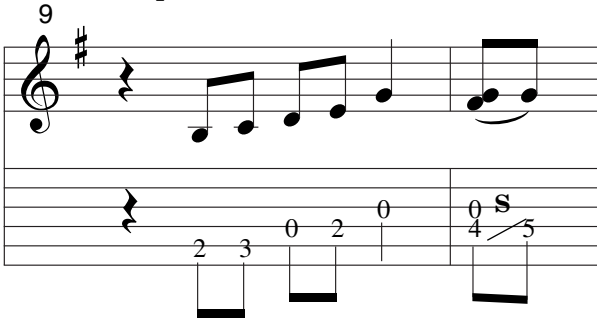

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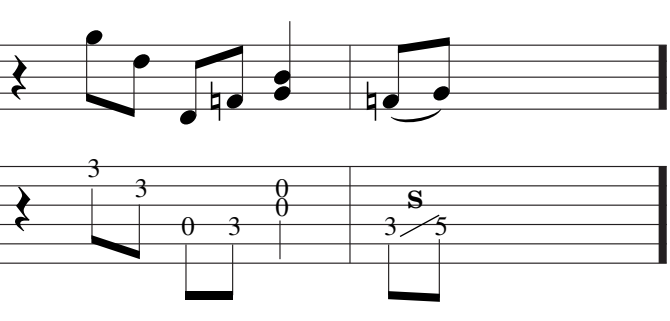

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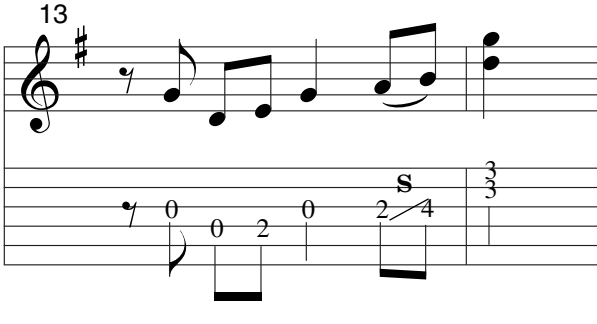

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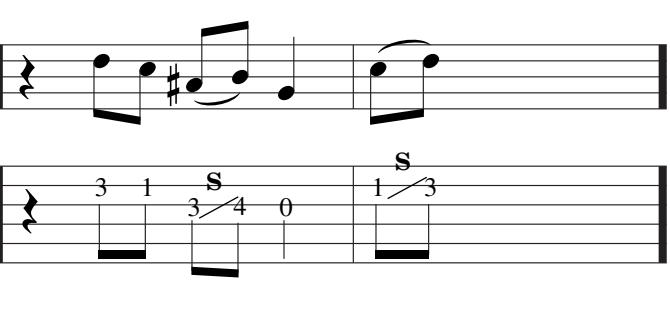

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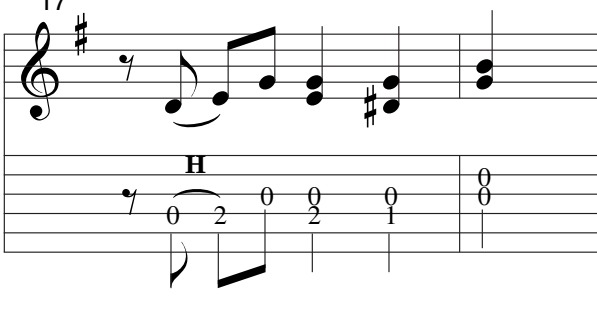
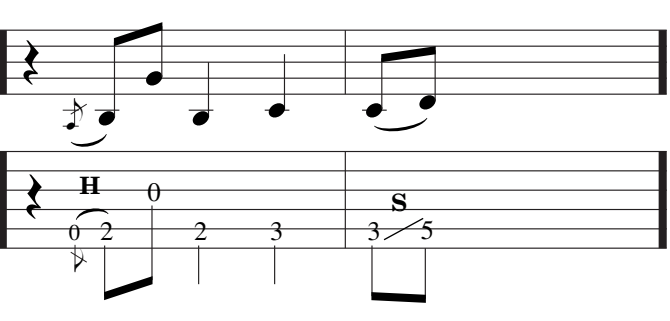


Example 10



JAM TUNES

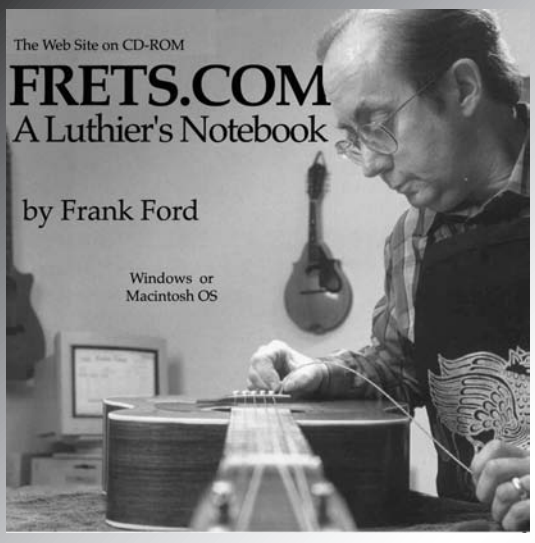
"Done Gone" with Andy Falco

This issue's "Jam Tunes" selection comes to us from Andy Falco of Long Island, New York. Andy is the guitar player for Buddy Merriam and Backroads and was featured in Volume 5, Number 1.

Since the last time we talked with Andy he has been busy touring with the band. They mostly perform in the northeast, but also made it down to IBMA in 2000 to do some showcasing in the hospitality suites. Andy says that the band will be going into the studio this winter to record a new project. The new project will be primarily original material.

In addition to playing with the band, Andy also works for Sony Music in New York. He feels that his position at Sony may allow him the opportunity to write some music for television. Andy says, "I would like to get into bringing more acoustic music to television."

When asked about his selection of "Done Gone" for this issue's "Jam Tune," Andy says that he was trying to decide what tune to record for this issue while he was at IBMA this past year (2001). He was in the hotel room with Buddy Merriam and Buddy started to play "Done Gone" on the mandolin. Andy says, "I like tunes that go to minor chords and I liked the melody." Andy had Buddy teach him the tune. After they got back to New York, Andy, Buddy, and Andy's brother Patrick (on bass) got together in Andy's home studio and recorded this arrangement for our audio companion CD. On the CD Andy first plays a slow version (this is the one that is transcribed on the following page) and then Andy, Buddy, and Patrick jam on the tune.



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Done Gone

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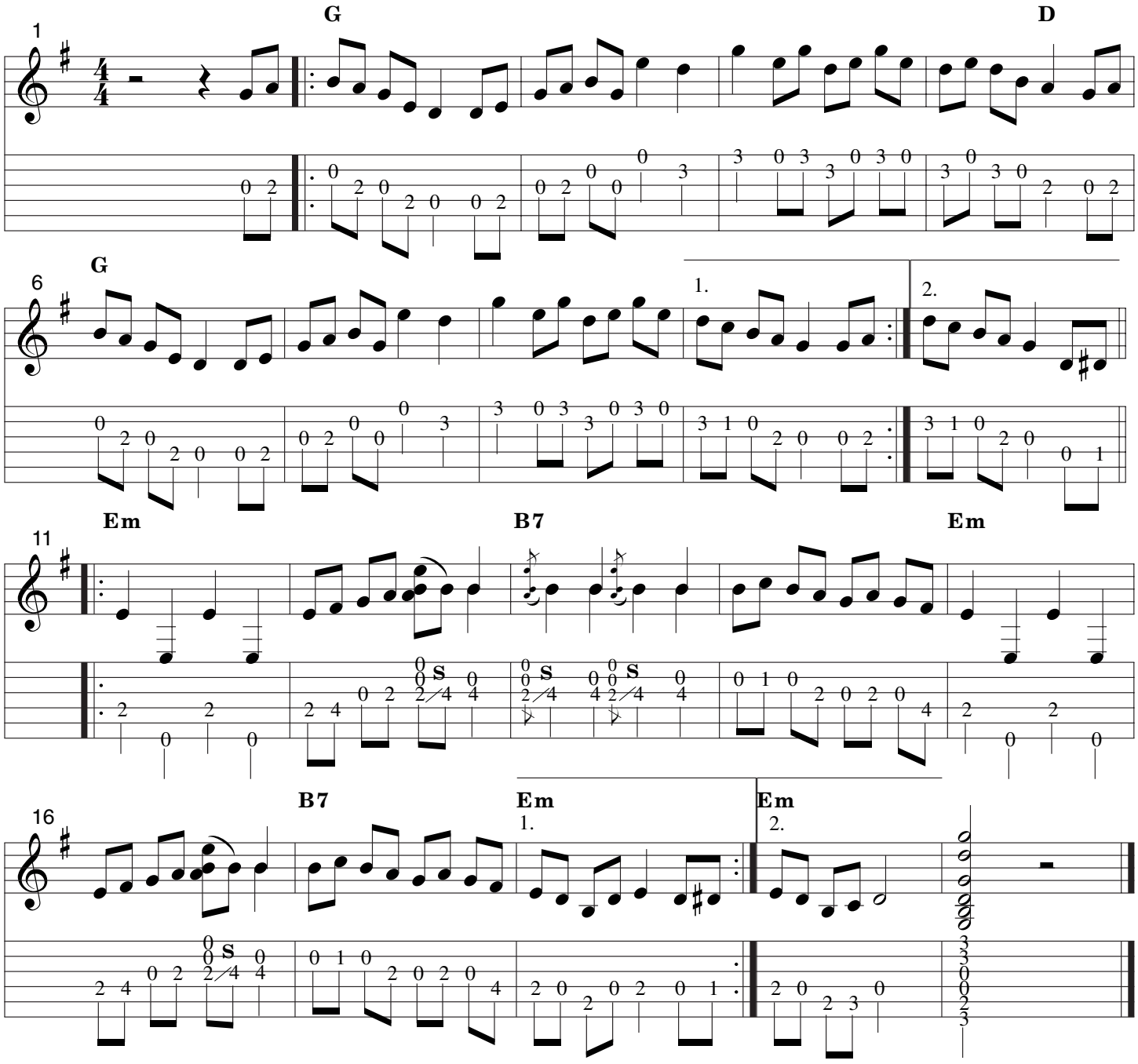
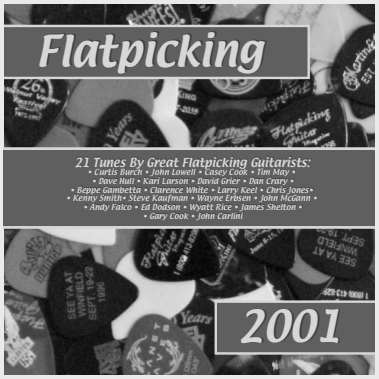
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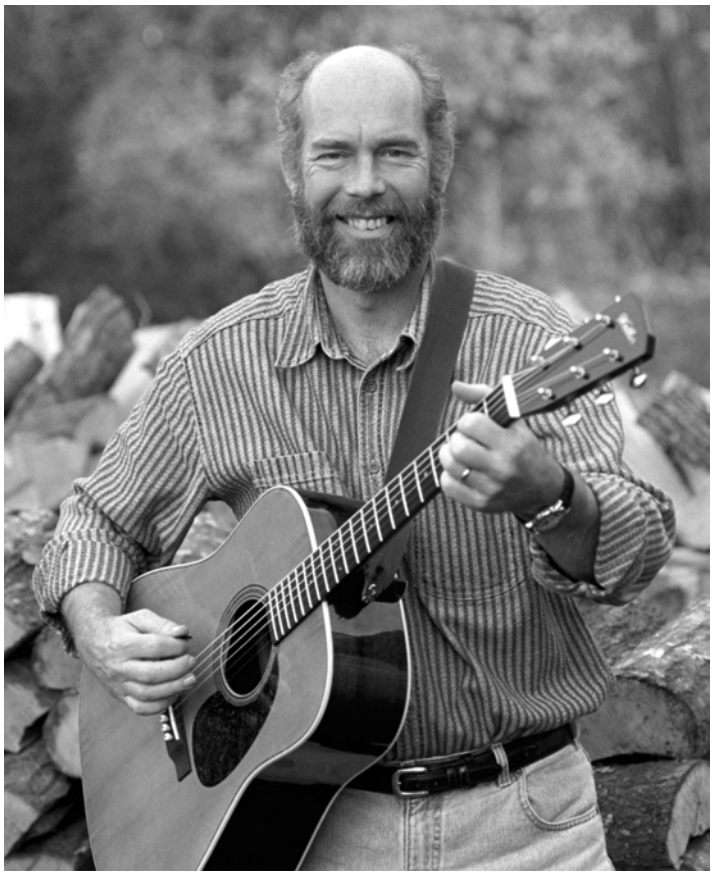

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How did you become interested in building guitars and can you tell me a little about your background in relation to building guitars?

When I was a kid I built stereos, model airplanes, model ships, flying model airplanes and that sort of thing. Building things has always been a part of me. I started playing acoustic guitar when I was in high school. I kept thinking that it was a cool thing even when I was at the University of Tennessee. I started looking for someone to teach me how to make guitars because there weren't any books at that point. I contacted the Martin Guitar Company and they didn't hire anyone except local folks. I found a guy that made dulcimers, Lee Schilling in Cosby, Tennessee. So I went to Cosby and made a few dulcimers with him and then went out on my own. Even though I started out making banjos and dulcimers, my goal was always to make guitars. This was a way to start building instruments when I couldn't find anyone to show me how to build guitars.

Then the Irving Sloan books came out and I said OK this is it and I started making and repairing guitars. At that time, I realized that I wasn't getting very far even though I made some guitars I was reasonably happy with. I still have one. Anyway, I saw an ad in *Frets Magazine* placed by George Gruhn. He was looking for repair people. I picked up the phone and called him and he said, "You've got to come over here." I went over there and saw the shop and knew that I wanted to work there. That was sort of the real leap into knowing what guitars were all about. While I was there I was building on the side. I had a shop at home.

In 1987, Gruhn bought a piece of Guild Music and he wanted me to go up and work there, sort of as his representative. He liked my skills as a guitar maker, so I did that for about 8 years and continued building at the house. It was kind of an interesting little pathway to what I really wanted to do. I learned a lot at each place along the way.

With the exception of Bill Henry (guitarist with the New England group, Northern Lights), most of the folks I know who play your guitars are finger style players. Do you know of other flatpickers that use your guitars?

There aren't many well known flatpickers who use my guitars other than Bill. Mike Vern just bought one last year. He's a bluegrass player in this area. I would say for the most part my guitars are played by finger style players.

I think a part of it is that I made a guitar for the owner/editor of *Fingerstyle Guitar Magazine* and he was real happy with the instrument. I've done several articles for that magazine and it helped me out with a lot of promotion on the fingerstyle end of things. It is kind of interesting to me that for longest time the Dreadnought guitar has been king of the flattop guitars and for flatpickers it pretty much still is the case, but there seems to be an awful lot of people interested in OMs and even smaller guitars like the like the L-00. I talked to Russ Barenberg about an L-00. Norman Blake is interested in that size quite a bit these days too. It really does seem that there is lot more interest in smaller guitars than there used to be.

Why do you think that is?

I think in part that there is really nice balance, punch and projection in the smaller guitars without having the giant bass sound that sometimes can be overwhelming in a performance situation. That big bass sound is hard to deal with especially in a high volume setting. Also, they're really comfortable to hold. The dreadnought is a pretty sizeable instrument. A lot of the comments I get from the people that come

to the shop are that the smaller body guitars are just really comfortable to hold. The 12-fret guitars are pretty popular and you get an awful lot of bass sound without having the wider, deeper body of the Dreadnought.

From browsing your web site (www.walkerguitars.com) I see that you use a wide variety of woods. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the materials you use and why you use them as well as some of your construction methods?

Sure, I'll start out with the back and sides materials. I'm pretty comfortable with using a wide variety of wood. Different woods impart different characteristics to a guitar and if you concentrate on the back and sides as a tonal influence, aside from the top, you can get a whole spectrum of sound. I kind of call it a dry sound and a wet sound, meaning like "reverby." The rosewoods are very wet and "reverby" sounding compared to maple. Maple is on the other end of the spectrum and has a very dry, clean sound. You get really good separation of notes and really good articulation out of maple.

With rosewood you get a really nice warm sound just as if you turned up the reverb on a Lexicon or something like that. And within the rosewoods there's sort of a variety where I think of Indian rosewood as being a cleaner, clearer sound than Brazilian; whereas the Brazilian has sort of the ultimate reverb sound in it. And then there are some other woods that are in between those, like a Honduras rosewood or Cocobolo rosewood. I think of mahogany as being the middle of the road. It's a nice warm sound in that it has a lot of clarity and good articulation. To my ears, koa runs between mahogany and maple.

I have the top woods categorized from very sensitive to woods that have a lot of dynamic range that you can really lay into and still produce a good clear sound. So I go from one end of the spectrum to the other where I consider cedar and Engelmann spruce at one end as sensitive and good for fingerstyle playing, especially nylon string fingerstyle playing. Adirondack (red) spruce is at the other end of the spectrum and has really good dynamic range. You can back off and play really well, but you can also drive it really hard and it won't distort like cedar or Engelmann.

I put Sitka in the middle where it's doesn't have quite as much dynamic range as red spruce, but it certainly has a lot more than cedar or Engelmann. Within each of those species there are sub-varieties. If you have the right piece of Sitka spruce it can sound much more like red spruce than anyone would imagine. Red spruce of course, being Adirondack spruce, can have a spectral sound. And some of it is not nearly as good as other pieces. If you pick carefully within each species you can get pretty good sound out of each of those top woods.

How and when do you make that determination about the wood?

It is sort of from touch, from handling enough of the wood. I can actually teach this to people fairly easily. If someone comes to the shop I can hand them a piece of wood and get them to feel it, tap on it, scratch it and flex the stiffness. I generally look for a piece that's very stiff and has a good tap tone. Some pieces give a much more ringing tone and some give a much more thudding tone. My tendency is to look for one that has a more ringing tone.

You can scratch your nails on the spruce and some pieces will sound like you are scratching on cardboard and some will sound like scratching on something that's super resonant like a good graphite fishing rod, or something that has a lot of responsiveness to it. You can really tell that the sound is transmitting through the board very readily on a piece of wood that has that good scratch tone. I'll do the same thing to an ebony bridge, fingerboard and neck material. I'll scrath and tap on it and listen to the tone. All of the parts of the guitar have musical properties that add up when you put the guitar together.

Are you using a standard advanced X top brace?

Yes, I'm using a standard advanced X. I took it from a 1934 000-45 that I really liked and I just sort of adapted that to different size guitars. At Gruhn's, I mapped out all the guitars I really liked. I would put a light inside and map out the bracing. So the right herringbone came through and I would map out the bracing. There was a particular 1941 D-18 that I really liked. I've used that bracing pattern quite a bit. But generally these days I used an advanced X. It's pretty close to the soundhole.

How is the bracing setup on the back and sides of your guitars?

I pretty much stuck with 30s Martin bracing for the back. Just the two narrow ones in the upper bout and the two wider ones on the lower bout and I really never found a reason to change that. If I want a different tone out of the back I usually change the thickness of the back. I do taper the ends of the bracing pretty much out to the edge. They are short at the line and that works out pretty well. I put bracing around the whole perimeter of the sides. Some people just put them at the waist to stiffen the waist to prevent cracking there, but I go all the way around.

Are you using a popsicle brace on the underside of the fret board?

Yes, I am. I don't really think that part of the sound board adds enough sound to those characteristic sounds of the guitar to warrant the structural problems that can come from not having the popsicle brace. I've heard just absolutely fine 30s Martin guitars that have the popsicle brace. I don't believe in leaving it out.

It sounds as though you are looking for certain characteristics out of each piece of wood you are using in your guitars. Do you feel your guitars have a certain characteristic sound?

Yes, I do. I just finished eight guitars and each of them has their own individual character. And I made a couple of L-00s, a couple of 12-fret 000s, and an OM, and some small jumbos and they all have their own sound, but within that context I think they all have what I call the "Walker twist," so there is a consistency in sound. Even though I make guitars ranging from 17 inch jumbos to single 0 sized guitars they have a characteristic sound. Obviously there's going to be a lot of difference between a 17 inch jumbo out of maple as opposed to and L-00 out of rosewood. But, because I sort of have a formula in my way of making guitars and try to optimize them by having a good response and a good temperateness of notes; good trebles and bass is the ultimate goal of course. But, yeah, I do think I get a characteristic sound.

Can you be more specific on the "Walker twist"?

A lot of what I make is vintage influence, but they are not copies. They are certainly heavily influenced by vintage Martins and vintage Gibson's, so I sort of say I am making an L-00, but you know it certainly has the Walker twist. It is not an exact copy. When I make an OM I am not making an exact copy of a 45 or an OM 28.

Is there a specific type of sound that you are looking for in your instruments?

Well, probably yes and no because there certainly is something I am very interested

in getting from my instruments, which is a strong fundamental note, so that my guitars are not real airy sounding. They are pretty solid sounding and I would like to get enough overtone and warmth to make them not a cold sounding guitar, but I do like to get good focus. I would say that is something I'm looking for in all my guitars. I want them to all articulate well, so that you can hear all the notes. I always go for fat trebles. I don't much care for a thin sound when you go up the neck. I'm really looking for articulation and clarity in the mid-range. Then, of course, we all want bass. You have to fill out the bass and balance it all together so that it can be played from one end of the finger board to another and you don't feel like you are hitting spots that are lacking.

Are you using any kind of CNC for your guitars?

Not so far. CNC'ing is appropriate for production, but a little less so to hand making or custom making. Of the eight guitars I just finished not one of them matches the other.

What I'm running into is that most of what I build are custom orders even though I have certain standard models. I have nine models and I rarely make those as standard models. Each person who is coming to me is looking for something that is individual and it really doesn't make sense to CNC individual guitars. So, with a few exceptions it's almost not practical for a custom maker.

How many guitars do you produce a year?

Well it does vary quite a bit and it certainly will vary the difficulty of the guitars I make. More and more the request for the guitars I make are for more intricate guitars. Even though I may plan a certain amount of guitars a year, I find that with a waiting list, and people having time to think about the guitar they've ordered, they tend to upgrade the order as time goes on. I may have thought I was going to make 24 guitars in a year, which is sort of a standard for me, but it never seems to work out that way. A good percentage of the people that have ordered from me changed their order to being a much more intricate guitar than I had anticipated. And I still make a fair number of arch tops and they take quite a bit more time; up to twice as long as a flattop.

How would you shape a guitar, soundwise, for a guitar that would go to a flatpicker as opposed to a fingerstyle player?

If I know that it's going to go to a finger stylist that plays extra light strings, that's playing blues, then I make the guitar quite a bit lighter. If I know it's going to somebody that's going to play a 1.5 mm tortoise shell pick, the guitar is made totally different. In that instane, I tend to go for a little thicker top, but scallop the braces so that it will certainly jump out.

I want to make sure the guitar has plenty of head room so that the player can really dig into it and not have it give out on them. There are plenty of guitars that sound good when played lightly, but when you start laying into them, they just don't have the head room and they run out of steam. They start distorting, you get a mushy bass and midrange and the ringing trebles all sort of blend together and you can't hear them.

Then there are those magic guitars that the harder you play, the better they sound. That's what I go for in a flatpicking guitar especially for someone who says they play hard. The first thing I ask after we pick out back and sides and top wood is "what strength do you play." Most of the guitars I make these days are for light gauge string players, which would be more appropriate for a flatpicker who is not very aggressive, a studio musician, or a fingerstyle player. If the player uses medium strings, I build the guitar accordingly.

Kim Walker lives in North Stonington, CT and can be reached at 860-599-1907. His web site can be found at http://www.walkerguitars.com, and his email is WalkerGtrs@aol.com.

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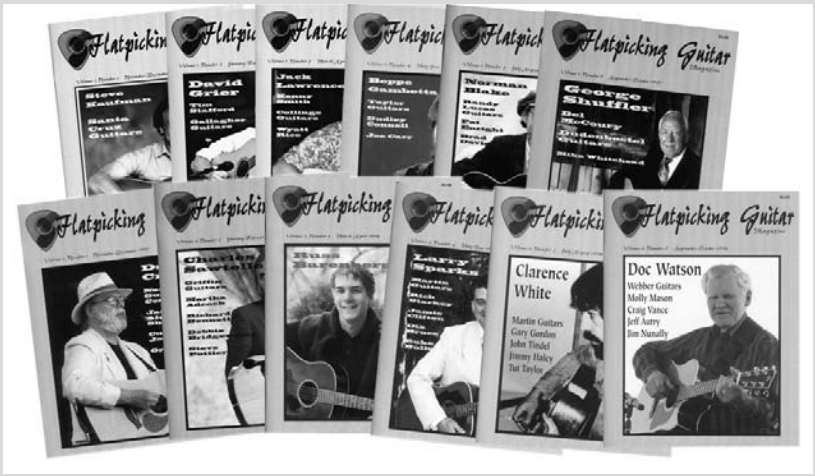
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Merrill Brothers Update

by Skip Staples

Dave, Nancy, and Jim Merrill at their new shop in Newport News, Virginia

Since Jim and Dave Merrill's feature in a previous issue (FGM Volume 4, Number 5), the Virginia luthiers have overcome significant hurdles and moved their shop. Things now look positive for the two brothers who, along with their sister Nancy, all apply their craftmanship to the family business. We visited them at their new place in Newport News, Virginia.

Excuse the mangled quote, but the rumor of their death has been greatly exaggerated. In fact, Merrill Brothers is alive and well and in their new location. The two-room shop is a former frame store and conveys the intimate atmosphere of an old woodworking shop. Jim is doing some cosmetic repair work to a Merrill C-28, the grand prize in a contest sponsored by *Flatpick Guitar Magazine* and Nashville Flattop Strings. On Dave's bench is a Martin D-35 in for some bridge work. And Nancy is cutting and beveling pickguards from some beautiful faux tortoise material. The place is humming.

But getting to this point hasn't exactly been smooth sailing. The usual hassles associated with any relocation had to be overcome, of course. But Jim had other difficulties with getting a small business off the ground.

The need to move the business in the first place was precipitated by an acrimonious split-up between Jim and his former "business associate." At the urging of some knowledgeable friends who advised that "something is very wrong," Jim began to ask a few questions. He learned he wasn't really a partner in the business at all, but an employee. This was contrary to the Merrills' understanding of the agreement, and the associate became indignant when Jim and Dave brought up the subject with him. The long and short of it is that the Merrills were locked out of the shop where their materials, tools, equipment, templates, finished guitars awaiting shipment, and even a family heirloom were kept. Jim also no longer had access to the business's bank account. The former associate told the Merrills they had just 30 days to buy him out. He then stopped responding to either Jim or Jim's lawyers.

During a visit to Virginia, Steve Swan learned that the associate had no intention of selling the business to Jim and Dave. Even worse, he told Swan to withhold this fact from the Merrills.

Most small businesses fold against adversities far less severe than these. But Jim insists he and his family never considered giving up, even in the dark hours. As a result of their hard work, confidence and perseverance, Merrill Brothers is up and running. And to make the point: do not confuse Merrill Brothers with the now-defunct Merrill Guitar Company.

The new shop is full of guitars in various stages of construction. Several bodies are in a rack above Jim's bench waiting for the attention of one of the Merrill luthiers. A few necks lie on the benches and Jim shows me a bag of bridges ready for gluing. Hanging in the spray room are several nearly completed instruments as well, including one beautiful dreadnaught with pale green abalone trim (sigh).

Merrill Brothers builds about 6 guitars each month with a current waiting list of less than a year. Most recently, Jim has been particularly pleased with his access to a supply of top quality Honduran rosewood in a very wide range of colors.

The talk at Merrill Brothers is all about guitars—building, repairing, playing, etc. It's a flatpicker's heaven. In fact, Flatpick-L members John Ward and Doug Burgoyne stop in to visit for a few minutes.

When discussing the craft of guitar building, Jim advises guitarists to judge all guitars as a unit rather than the sum of the individual parts. "What makes a good instrument is one built with continuity, as a homogenous unit," he says. "It's how everything works together that makes a special guitar stand out." Clean joints that fit together well is high on the Merrill Brother's quality list.

Merrill Brothers guitars are rapidly gaining advocates in the flatpicking community, and for good reason. Jim, Dave and Nancy are talented luthiers. They care about their craft, they are focused on quality, and they are obviously unafraid of adversity.

You can contact Merrill Brothers Guitars at 805 Old Oysterpoint Road, Newport News, VA 23602, or call them at 757-591-9500.

And here's a secret: there's a bit of that Merrill family heirloom in every guitar they build. Just ask Nancy about it.

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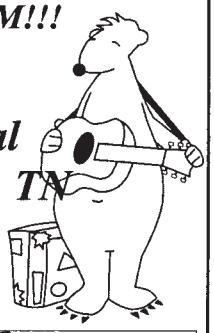

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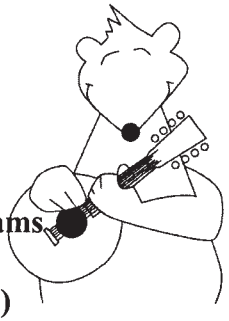

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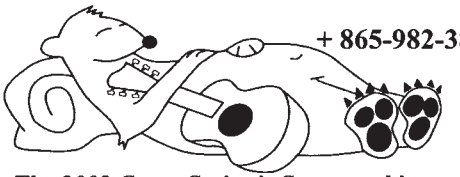

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THE O-ZONE

by Orrin Star

Don't Let Your Deal Go Down

"Don't Let Your Deal Go Down" is a great song with at least a couple different versions. It was ensured a prominent place in flatpickdom when Doc recorded it on his seminal *Live On Stage* Vanguard double album. His version—which he learned from Charlie Poole and which has become the standard bluegrass one—features a ragtime-flavored chord progression a la "Salty Dog Blues." But there is also a spookier, old-timey version that is very compelling.

I first heard this second version played and sung by Tony Rice on a Tony Trischka record. It has been my favorite version on the guitar for a number of years now. And—having recently decided to include two solos for it in a new *Flatpicking Primer* video that I have recorded for the worthy publisher of this journal—I thought I would share them with you all.

So, without further delay, an O-Zone World Exclusive Preview: my Carter-style and crosspicked solos to "Don't Let Your Deal Go Down."

This Carter-style first solo could just as well be dubbed a Blake-style solo; Norman kind of took the Carter thing to the next level by incorporating more sophisticated and syncopated strums and lead lines into a very straightforward way of communicating a melody. Though fairly basic, my version does include some strums that Carter purists might not think to use. The noteworthy thing about this approach is that it sounds complete even when played solo. And the main technical thing to keep in mind is: pick your lead notes like lead notes (crisp and precise) and your strums like strums (loose right hand); if you don't keep those two elements distinct then mush will result.

The second solo is an almost pure crosspicking encampment (with a little floating thrown in for good measure). Being from the "pure alternation" school of crosspicking, my pick-strokes are constantly alternating between "up" and "down" whenever the pick is engaged (i.e. except for when there's a hammer-on or pull-off or slide or a quarter note); your pick should be mimic the direction of your foot when you tap your foot in time.

'Brooklyn Bluegrass Maestro' Orrin Star is an award-winning guitar, banjo and mandolin player. The 1976 National Flatpicking Champion, he has toured and recorded widely, appeared on A Prairie Home Companion and is the author of "Hot Licks for Bluegrass Guitar". See www.flatpick.com/ostar.

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Don't Let Your Deal Go Down

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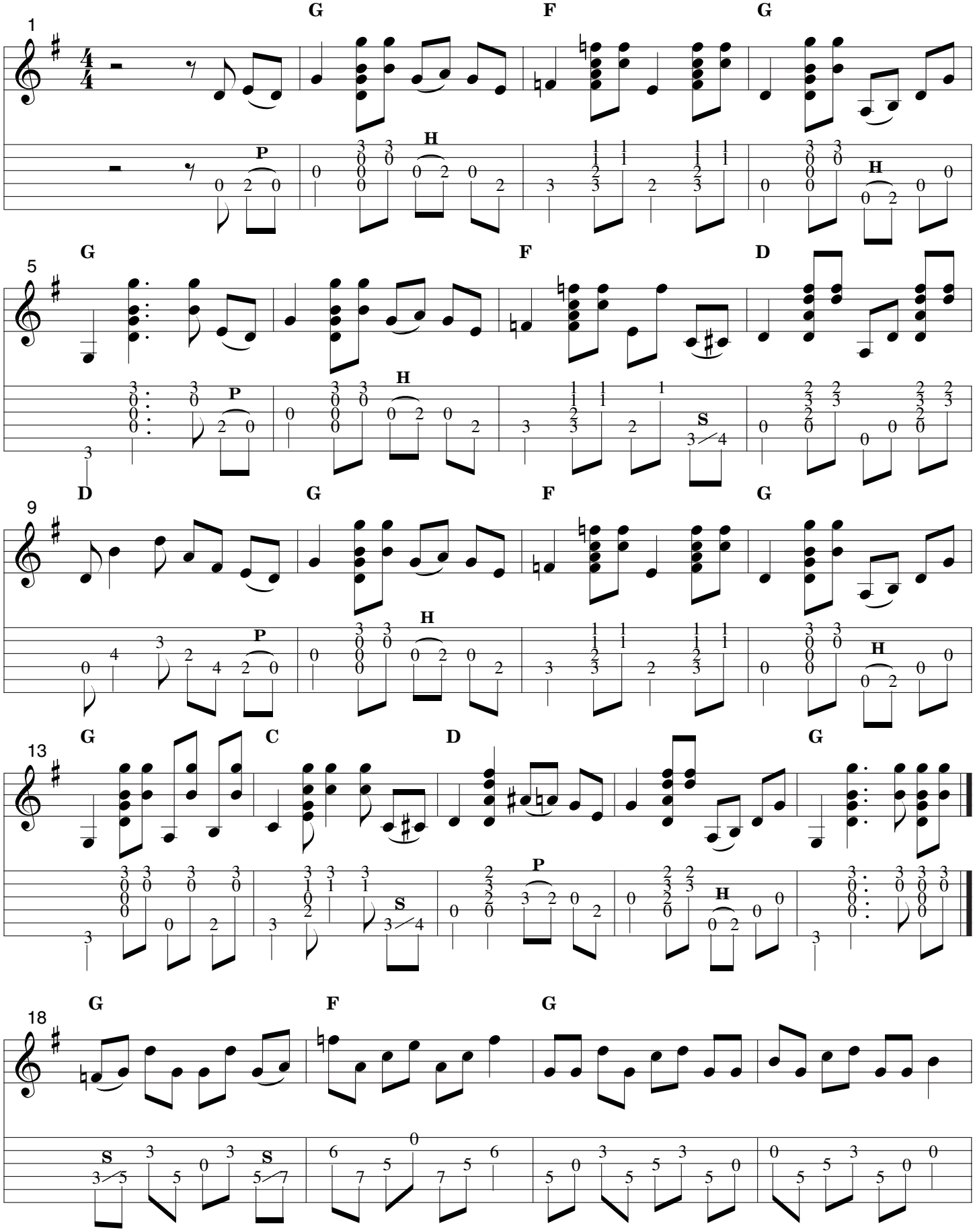
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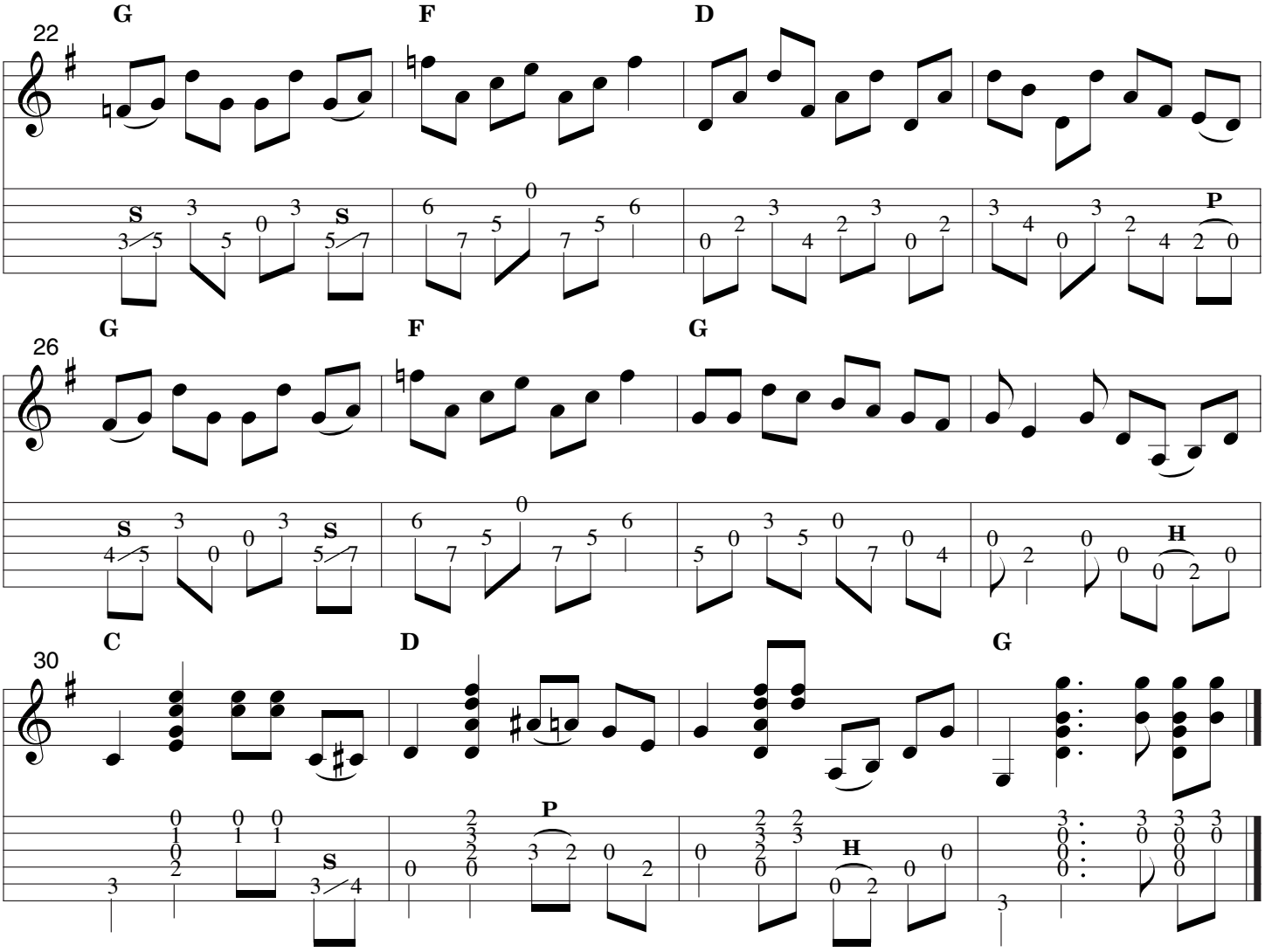
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Old Time Back-up: "Colored Aristocracy"

by Dix Bruce

As you know from recent columns, I've been going back to some of my original influences and studying them in depth to discover exactly what these great musicians played. Not long ago we looked at Earl Scruggs' lead and rhythm guitar playing on Flatt & Scruggs' "Jimmie Brown the Newsboy" and later we learned Charlie Monroe's rhythm guitar part on the Monroe Brothers' "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms." In this column we'll look at John Cohen's guitar work on the New Lost City Ramblers' 1958 Folkways recording "Colored Aristocracy." I thought it might be fun to take apart a tune that's popular among current old time musicians and deeply rooted in the old time style. ("Current old time musicians" how's that for an oxymoron?) I had such a good time transcribing the guitar part that I kept going and transcribed the fiddle lead, which I adapted to guitar. I think youâ ™ll enjoy learning both parts.

In 1958, the original New Lost City Ramblers were Mike Seeger, John Cohen, and Tom Paley. The Ramblers were three young city kids who loved old time American music and were among the first "citybilly" groups to record and perform old time country music to northern, urban, young college audiences. Each played a variety of instruments. They learned much of their repertoire from obscure 78 rpm recordings made in the 20s and 30s which they rescued from junk shops and dusty archives. These recordings led them to seek out the surviving musicians whom they visited, played with, promoted in concert, and from whom they learned and collected more music first hand. It became a quest that led to an ever-widening circle of music and musicians. The Ramblers in turn put this music on record and passed it on to many more musicians and fans, myself among them.

The Ramblers offered me and thousands of other traditional American music enthusiasts an entree into unknown and wonderful worlds that we didn't know existed and to which we would not have had access to if it were not for them. At the time, this music was just not heard, except maybe in a university folklore or musicology class. For the most part radio and TV ignored contemporary versions of old time music and certainly wanted no part of scratchy 78 recordings from the 1920s. In the rush toward modernism and commercial music, old time music had been relegated to the dustbin of cultural history.

Groups like the Ramblers stirred up an interest in old time music and played pivotal roles in making the music available once again on recordings and in live concerts. Record companies small and large began to re-issue original recordings from the 20s and 30s and also to record new groups that played the old style music. Everybody wanted to share in the folk scare, which was taking root and growing rapidly, even in pop music circles. (It's interesting to note that the recordings in these re-issues were only twenty to thirty years "old" at the time. That's like people in 2001 looking back at disco music. Don't it strike fear into your heart? You know me, I love all types of music, but one run at disco was plenty for this guitar picker!) All this activity promoted a revival, almost a renaissance of old time music. Old time record sales and concert attendance didn't threaten the preeminence of Elvis Presley or Perry Como, but they did breath new life into the music by making it available again.

The Ramblers recordings were always enjoyable, always well-played and sung, and always interesting. Every LP was a classic which contained several drop dead great songs. I always loved the Ramblers' energy, humor, and their great accomplishments on a variety of instruments. Later, as the original recordings the Ramblers learned from became available and I heard them, I was awed at how accurately the Ramblers presented the original music.

As I was listening to the Ramblers' recording of "Colored Aristocracy" a gain recently, I was struck by the great guitar part John Cohen played. It is not just a random collection of bass notes and strums but a composed "part" that makes perfect sense, especially in this trio, just like the Scruggs and Monroe parts in their ensembles. So, I transcribed it and you'll find it below.

I called John Cohen to ask him a few questions about "Colored Aristocracy" and he was most gracious and helpful. I'd like to thank him again for taking the time to speak with me.

"Colored Aristocracy" had been learned from a Virginia field recording that Mike Seeger's father, musicologist Charles Seeger, had made. At time of the Ramblers' recording, John says he didn't know the song well and more or less developed the guitar part on the spot. He said he didn't consciously set out to play any set part but rather tried to play something he felt was appropriate in the Ramblers trio on that type of tune. John used a flatpick and based his playing on several sources, among them Riley Puckett, Sam McGee, various country blues players, the guitar sound of Charlie Poole & North Carolina Ramblers, and of course the playing of Maybelle Carter. (By the way, John says that Maybelle used a range of different picking techniques and equipment from bare thumb and fingers to thumbpick and fingers to a flatpick, which she called her "flailing" pick.)

For the most part, the following transcription of "Colored Aristocracy" is written exactly as played, though there are a few places where John changes a bass note here or there on repetitions of the solos. It's fairly simple and self-explanatory. The beauty of this guitar part is not in its difficulty or complexity but rather in how eloquently it gets the job done on this tune in this ensemble. John Cohen offers a rock solid foundation for the fiddle and banjo.

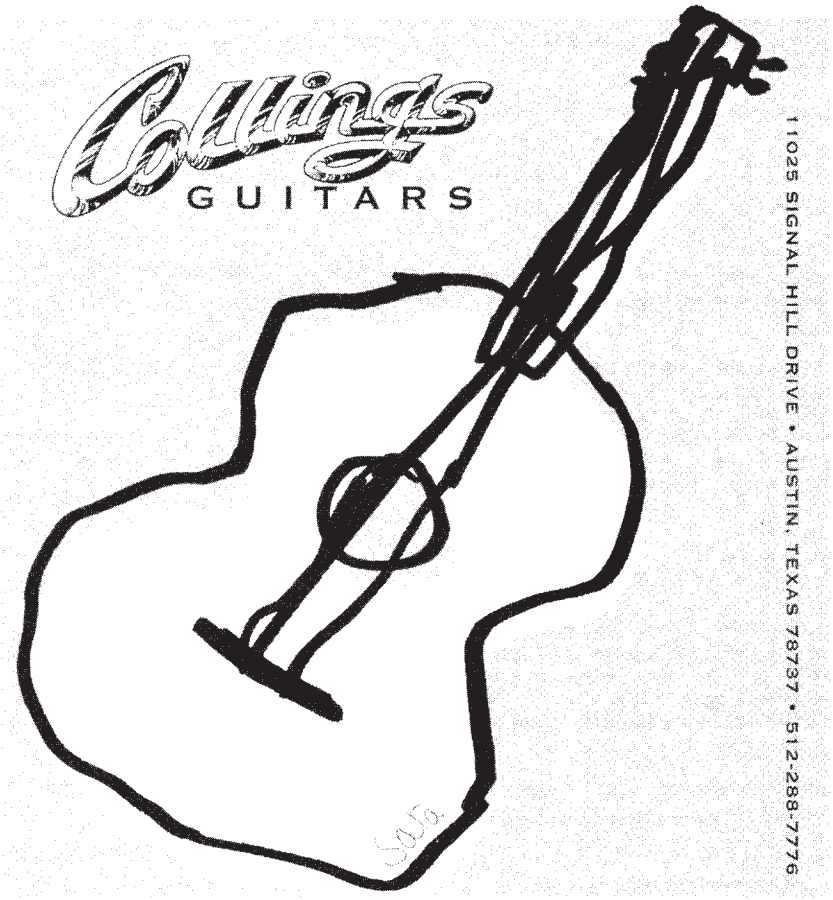
The lead guitar solo is based on Mike Seeger's fiddle part. I adapted it somewhat to fit the guitar but I think it retains the flavor of the fiddle source.

"Colored Aristocracy" has long been a popular tune among old time and contra dance players. They often play it with

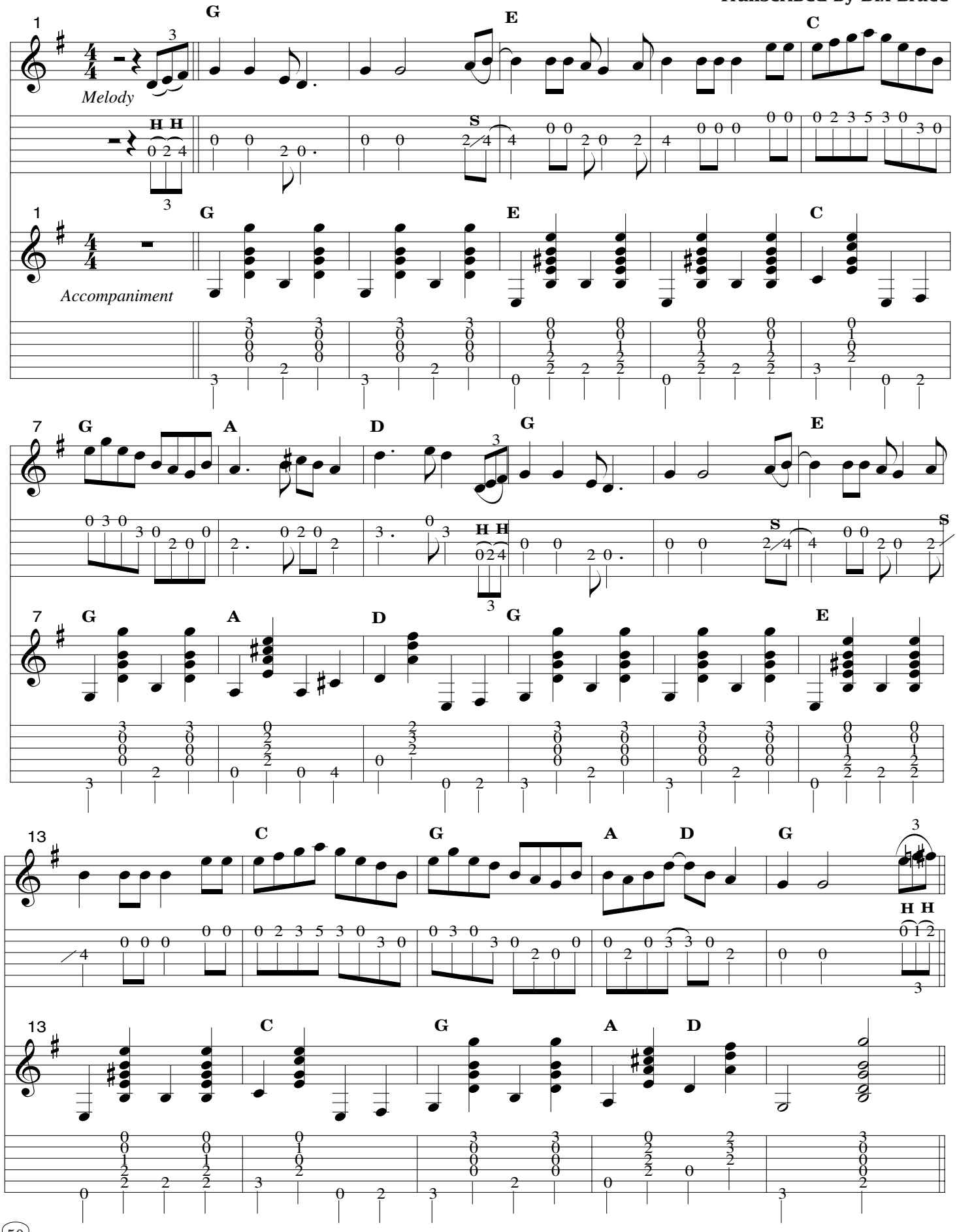
Em chords in place of the E majors the Ramblers used. John told me that when the current Ramblers (Seeger, Cohen, and Tracy Schwartz) re-recorded the song for the CD *There Ain't No Way Out*, Mike Seeger made it a point use the E major chord from the original field recording, not the Em chord that so many people now use. I've also heard versions where the E or Em is played for two measures in both the first and second part, not for three measures as in part two of the Ramblers' version.

The Ramblers' original recording of "Colored Aristocracy," from which I transcribed the version shown below, is currently available on *The New Lost City Ramblers: The Early Years, 1958-1962* Smithsonian Folkways SF CD 40036. Thanks to John, Mike, Tom, and Tracy Schwartz for bringing us such great music for over forty years.

Dix's two newest books for Mel Bay Publications are Great Mandolin Pickin'Tunes*, (book & CD set) an eclectic collection of tunes for mandolin including Classical, Bluegrass, Gospel, Cajun, Ethnic, Christmas, Jazz, Irish, Old-Time, Italian, and Ragtime selections; and* Guide to Capo, Transposing, & the Nashville Numbering System*, a comprehensive explanation of music theory for guitarists which includes all the subjects mentioned in the title. His two newest instructional videos are from Stefan Grossman's Guitar Workshop and are titled* Basic Country Flatpicking Guitar *and* Basic Swing Guitar. *(TOLL FREE: 1-877-219-0441) Mel Bay is set to release Dix's book of Jerry Garcia Transcriptions from the Garcia/Grisman recording* Shady Grove *(excerpted in* Flatpicking Guitar Magazine*) plus a new BackUP TRAX play along book/CD set: Basic Blues in Fall 2001.*



Colored Aristocracy

Transcribed by Dix Bruce

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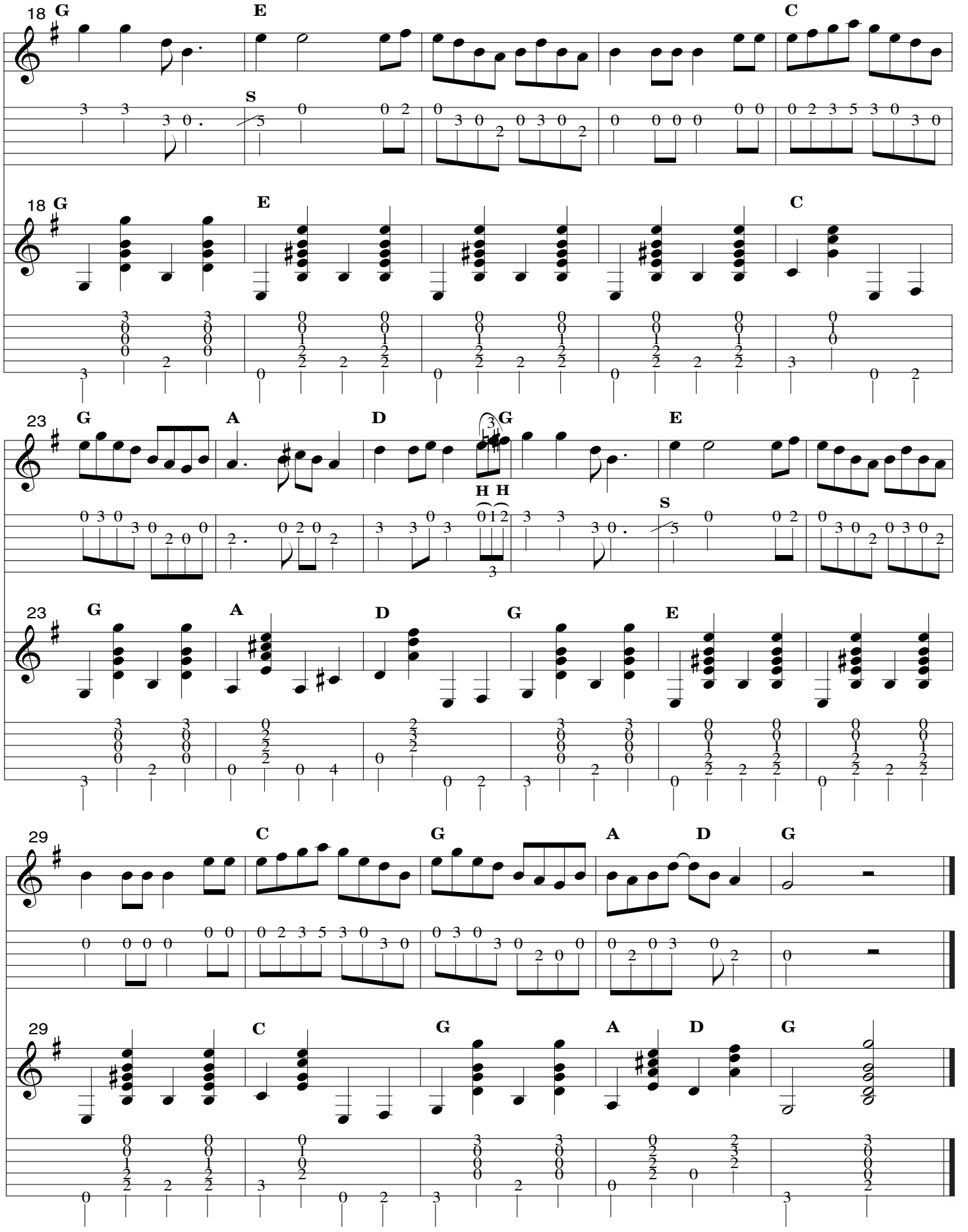
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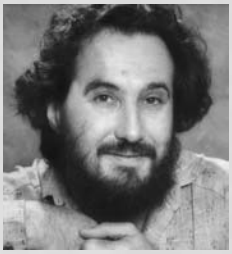

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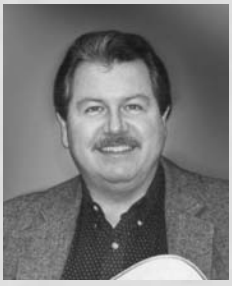

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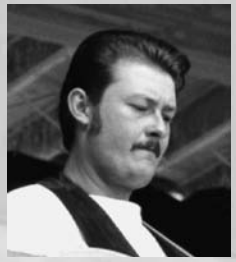

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by Michel A. Maddux

Frets, Pat Flynn, and The 5 T's of Music

The now-defunct *Frets Magazine* featured a regular column by Dan Crary, and from time to time interviews and transcriptions with other flatpickers. In a *Frets* interview with guitarist Pat Flynn of the legendary New Grass Revival, Pat mentioned the 5 "T's" of music: Touch, Tone, Tuning, Timing, and Taste.

Touch, Tone, and Timing

Touch describes the way that you play the instrument. Do the notes flow smoothly from the instrument, or are they "thuppy"? Is the tone from the instrument thin, or is it the big rich sound of the bluegrass guitar? Is your timing metronomic, or does it vary?

Develop your Touch by practicing the fingering exercises and songs daily. Always strive for Tone—the best sounding note that you can get—from every note you play. Timing. You develop through faithful use of a metronome, and through playing with other musicians. Never be satisfied with poor timing.

Tuning with Harmonics

Next, Tuning. The 6 string Dreadnought guitar can be challenging to tune. In a sense, you must learn to "temper" the tuning (ala. Bach and the "Well Tempered Claviar"). The tuning method that follows is adapted from a Dan Crary column in *Frets*, ca. 1982. I have been using this method for years now and have been very pleased with the consistent tuning of the instrument.

This method tunes the high E string to pitch with the tuning fork, or electronic tuner, then tunes all of the rest of the strings to the high E string (except for the B string, which is covered in Step 6 below).

Step 1: Begin with the high E string (that's the non-wound string, highest in pitch) and tune it to the tuner or to a tuning fork E.

Step 2: Next, tune the low E string, using the 5th fret harmonic (which sounds the E note two octaves higher), to the open string high E. Listen for the wah-wah sound that you can hear in the strings when they are slightly out of tune and eliminate it.

Step 3: Tune the A string (the 5th string) to the open E string using the 7th fret harmonic, which sounds the E note.

Step 4: Tune the D string (the 4th string) to the high E string fretted at the 5th fret, using the 7th fret harmonic, which sounds the A note.

Step 5: Tune the G string using the 12th fret harmonic, to the E string fretted at the third fret.

Step 6: Tune the B string by fretting a G note on the 8th fret. Play the open G string, then the fretted B string. Tune the B string to the open G string.

You may have to repeat these steps a couple of times; with practice you will find that this method will quickly bring the guitar into perfect tune.

Taste

Last in the list of the 5 "T's" is Taste. Taste is the most intangible of all of the concepts. You can hear it in an artist's playing. The notes that he or she chooses to play are just right somehow, reflecting the style of the song and the beauty of the acoustic guitar.

Taste is something that you develop by listening to other musicians, by playing with other musicians, and by thinking about how to reflect your own personality and experience in your music.

I want you to listen to as many different musicians and styles of music as you can. Develop an ear for music by listening to other players. Try to hear when they are playing licks that you know, or scales that you know, and listen to how they construct solos—what type of musical devices they use. Did they play 16th or 32nd notes? Did they change the feel by playing a lick in half-time, or maybe throw in some triplets? What about volume—the effective use of dynamics, the loud and soft stuff that keeps it interesting. The most tasteful artists use every musical device that they can invent. Keep your playing innovative and interesting. Good taste is up to you.

Creating Original Solos Using Substitutions

The concept of substitutions means to use a chord, scale, or lick that is outside of the chord of the song. For example, in the key of G, an E minor run or lick is an interesting substitution.

E minor is the relative minor to the key of G. That means that you can substitute the E minor chord and E minor licks, even when the rest of the band is playing a G chord. Use your ears (and good taste!) to decide when and where to use this type of substitution.

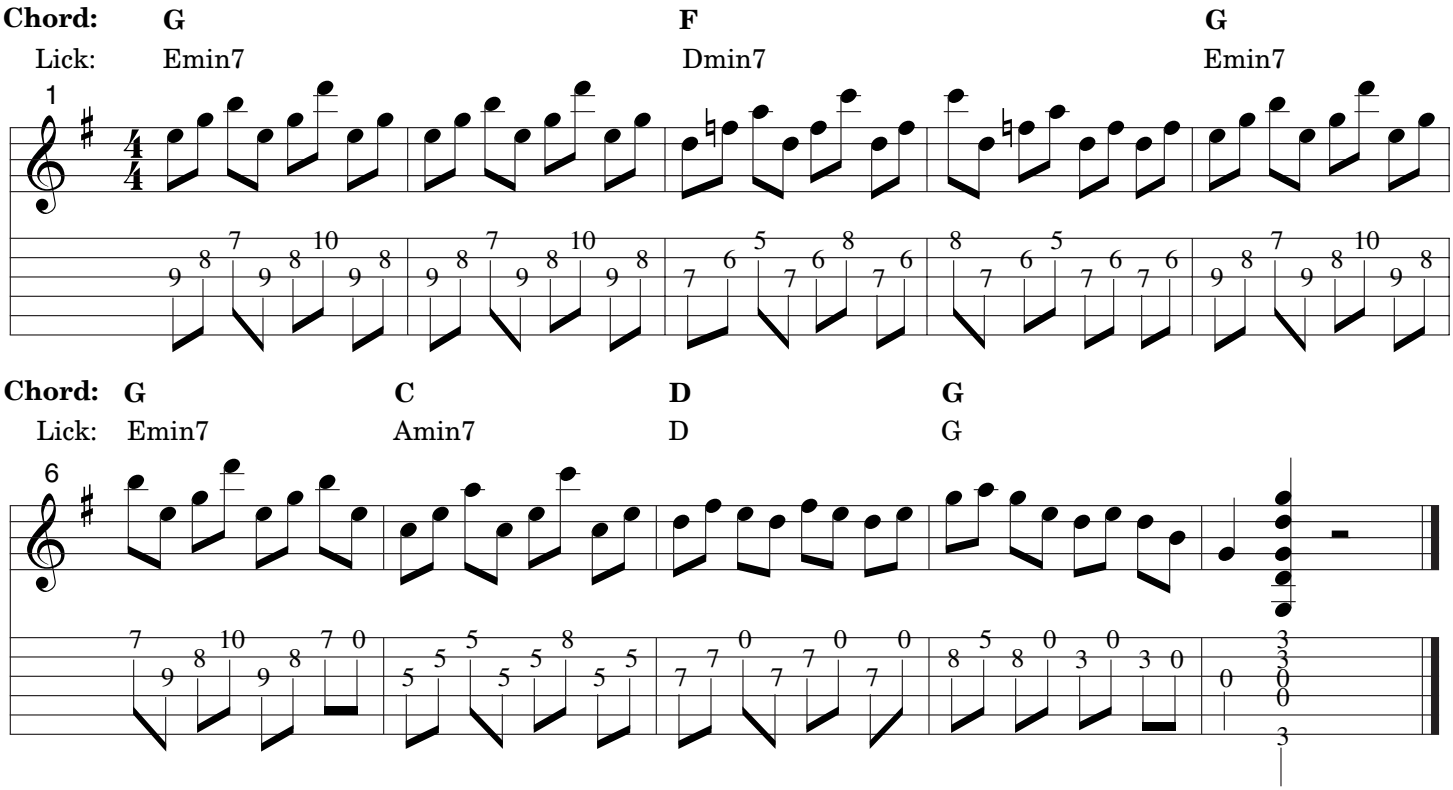
Exercise 1 shows a series of moveable licks that are played while the band is playing G-F-C-D chords. In 7th position the lick is an E minor played over the G chord; in 5th position it is a D minor lick, played over an F chord. As a note, if you move the lick to 9th position, it becomes an F#-minor played over an A chord, and so on.

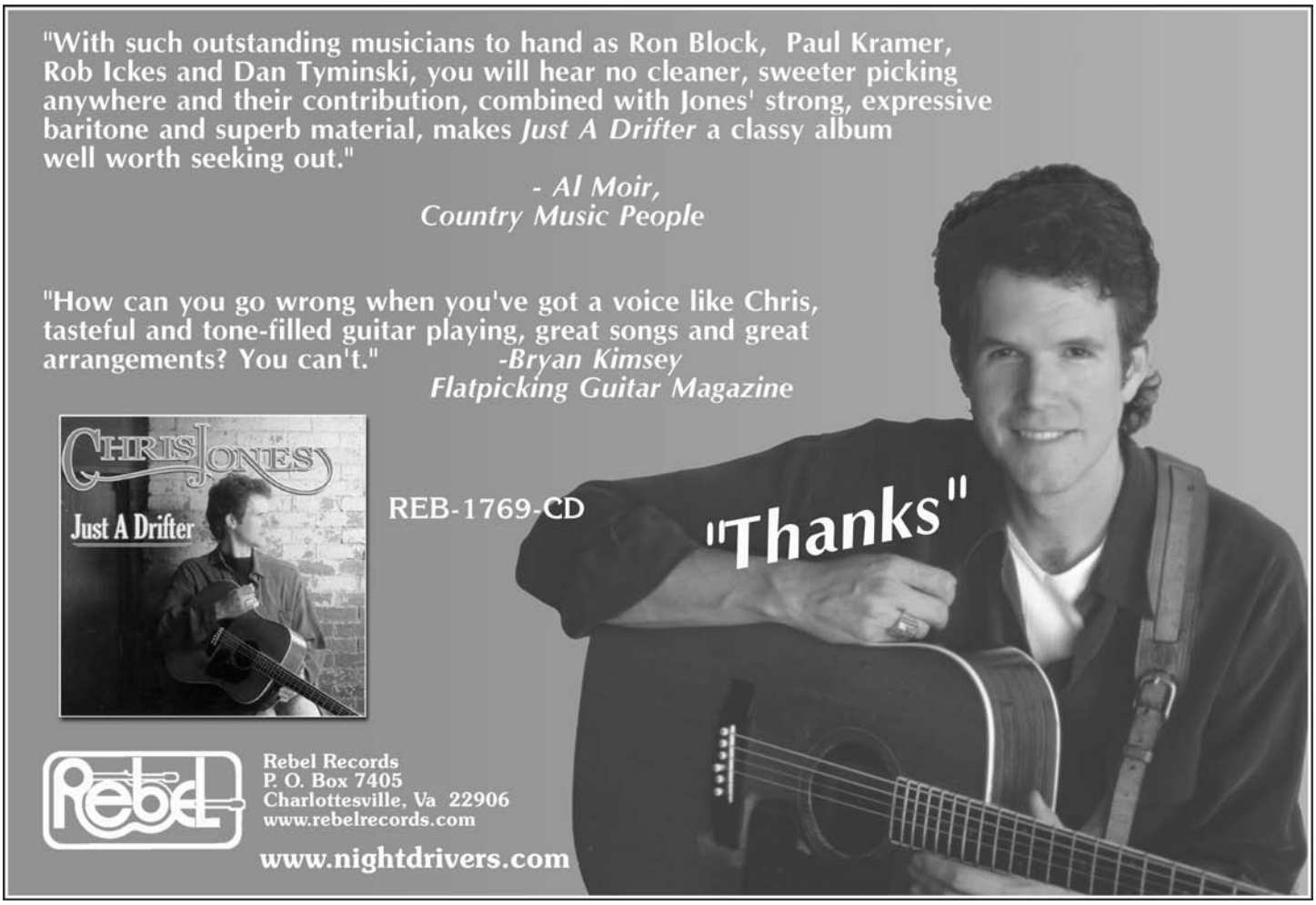
About the Tune:

"Turkey in the Straw" is one of my favorite old-time fiddle tunes. The first section is played fairly straight. In the [B] section the second time through I use the substitution example for part of it, with a floaty lick to take it home.

Have fun, and keep on pickin'!

Exercise 1: Substitution Exercise Using E-minor-7 Lick over G Chord

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Turkey In The Straw

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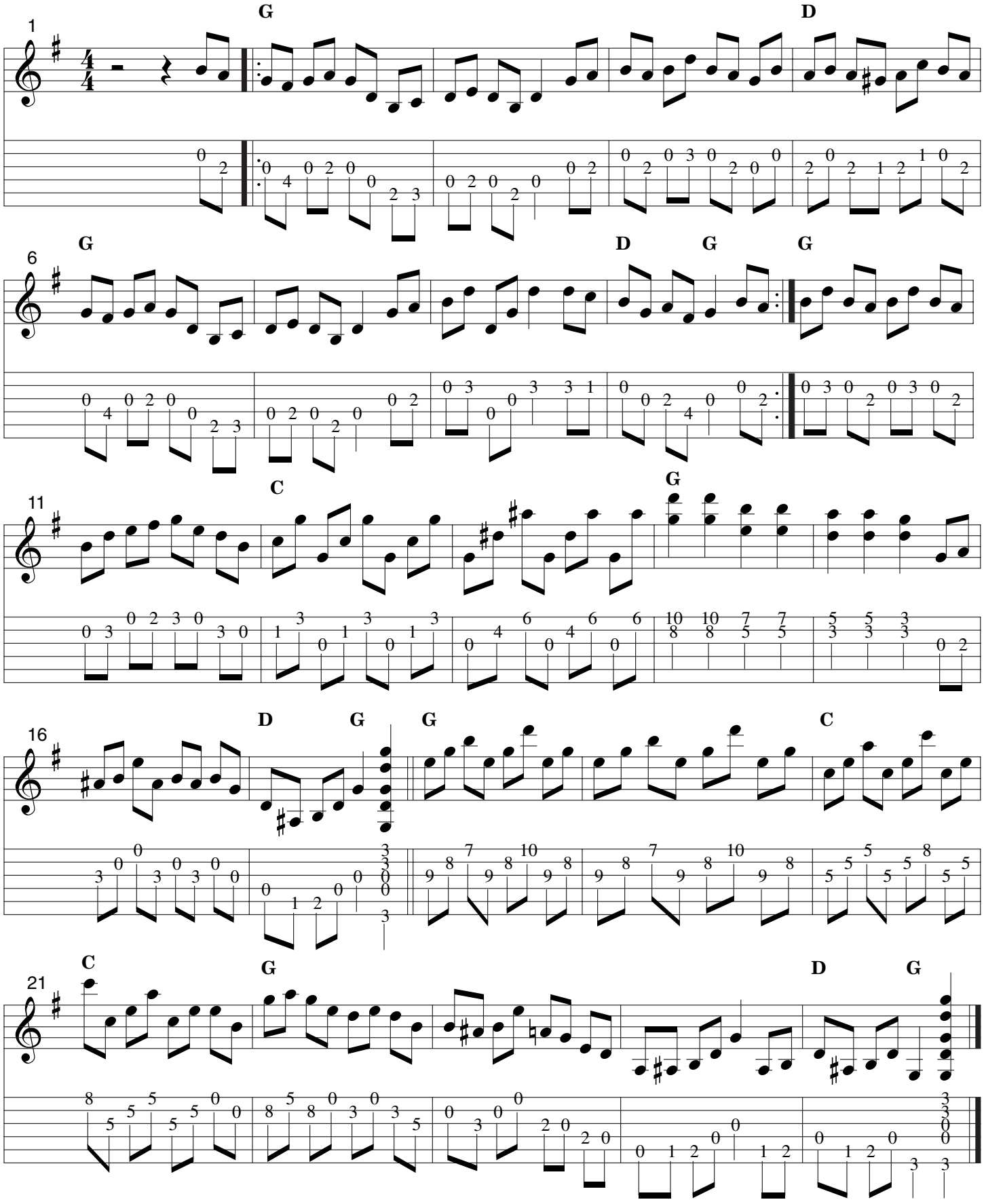

Gospel Guitar

with Harold Streeter

America the Beautiful

The subject of this column this time around was to be that of tag licks, those catchy little punctuation phrases we all tend to collect and play in Gospel and other kinds of tunes. However, in view of what's been happening in and to our country recently, it seemed more fitting to defer that idea until the following issue in favor of a patriotic song; "America the Beautiful." It's a piece included in many hymnals, and we've played and sung it frequently at our church since the aggressive and tragic acts against our country on Sept 11th. I believe we'll all be in need of hearing such pieces long into the future, not only as part of church services, but as part of other venues.

The solo arrangement shown here has been taken for several test drives, so to speak, in different venues since September 11th. If you're called upon to play the piece for similar occasions, I think you'll find it goes over fairly well. Originally, "America the Beautiful" contained only half a dozen chords or so. This treatment, however, contains many more than that, with some being jazz-oriented, all in an attempt at rendering a more interesting and fuller sounding chord/melody arrangement.

Don't let that dissuade you from learning it, though. A lot of the forms are fairly easy, and the slow tempo of the piece allows for just about any combination of down and up strokes you feel is logical. The easy chord forms, of course, can take care of themselves, but it would be a good idea to take a look at some of the others.

For starters, several forms involve blocking or muffling strings. Muffle the fifth string in the A#dim and Bm7 forms in measure 5, the fifth string in the A#dim7 chord in measure 6, and in the Bm11 form in measure 7. All four chords involve holding the sixth string with your middle finger, and the idea is to allow your middle finger to lay against the fifth string to muffle or block it. That way, you'll be able to strum through the chords beginning on the sixth string without hearing the fifth string.

Also in the muffle category are the A9 form in measure 13, and the Aadd9 form in measure 15. For these two, the fourth string is blocked. In A9, the block is the job of your middle finger lying against it. For Aadd9, this task falls to your index finger. The idea is the same as with the first batch of chords; to allow a strum beginning with the fifth string without hearing the fourth string.

Next, in measure 11, we have another form that requires muffling the fifth string; Bm7. This one is a little trickier, though, because a secondary goal is to also allow the open fourth string to sound.

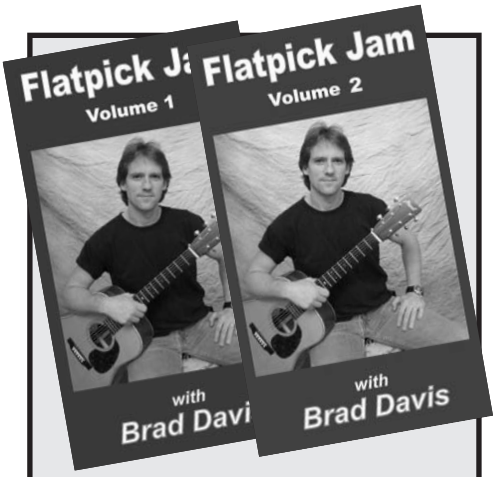
Another form worthy of mention is Bm7, which begins the 12th measure. Here, it may feel a little strange at first to barre the first four strings with your ring finger while looping your middle finger over to hold down the sixth string. Spend some time with it, though, because it's a common jazz form that you'll get a lot of mileage out of in other situations.

Finally, a couple of stretchy forms that may take some getting used to. The first is Aadd9, which is the first chord in both first and second endings. Think of this one as just the macho "bluegrass A" everyone uses a lot, but with an extra finger thrown in. While that one may or may not give you a few fits, fits are guaranteed for the very last chord of the song; Ama9. This one requires a 5-fret stretch, but its saving grace is its high placement on the fingerboard where the frets are closer together. Again, spend some time with it, because the sound is rewarding and it may come in handy for ending another tune sometime.

Just a word about the demo of "America the Beautiful" on the CD for this issue. It was recorded on an old flamenco guitar, which by definition, is made of cypress, weighs exactly 3 pounds, and has traditional friction pegs. While most flat pickers play steel-string guitars, nylon-string guitars also occasionally lend themselves quite nicely to flat picked songs. In terms of mood and message, "America the Beautiful," in my view, is one of them.

Playing patriotic songs rank right up there with displaying our flag, so hope you get the chance to play this one for lots of listeners.

Don't forget, always looking for tunes and ideas for future columns, so give a holler if you've got one. Also, take a look at our web site when you get the chance (www.lewalt.com). It has more stuff than ever for flat pickers, banjo players, and mandolin players.



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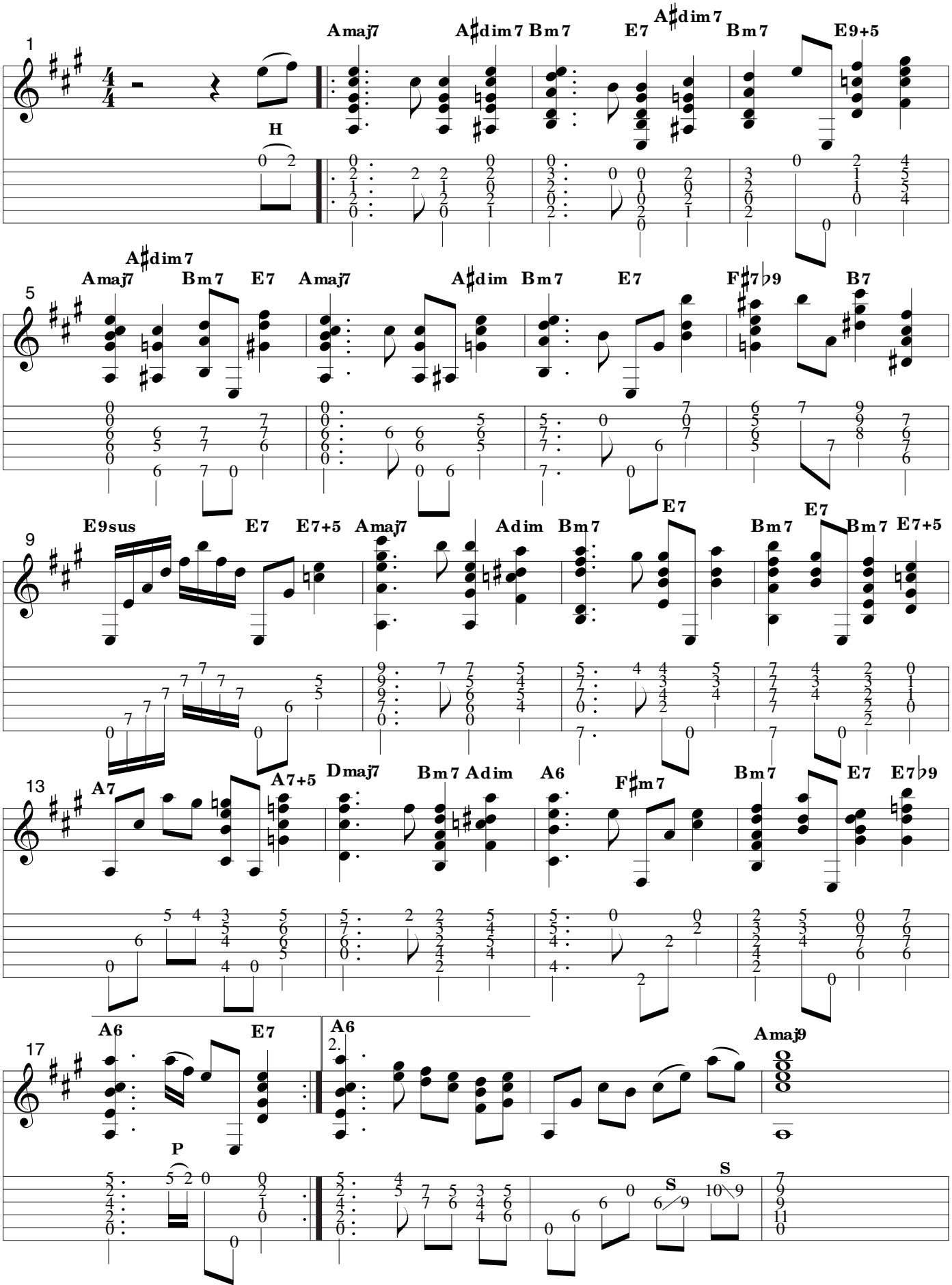
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Classical Flatpicking: "Agitato"

I frequently find that playing classics with a flat pick or writing tunes in a "classic style" can be very beneficial. One thing the classics offer is the ability to play with a maximum amount of expression.

The enclosed piece, "Agitato," was written in C minor, third position. The selection should be played with a maximum amount of expression. You may choose to slightly accelerate some parts, slightly retard some other parts and use a certain amount of vibrato. In the middle secion, the solo goes into C major.

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Agitato

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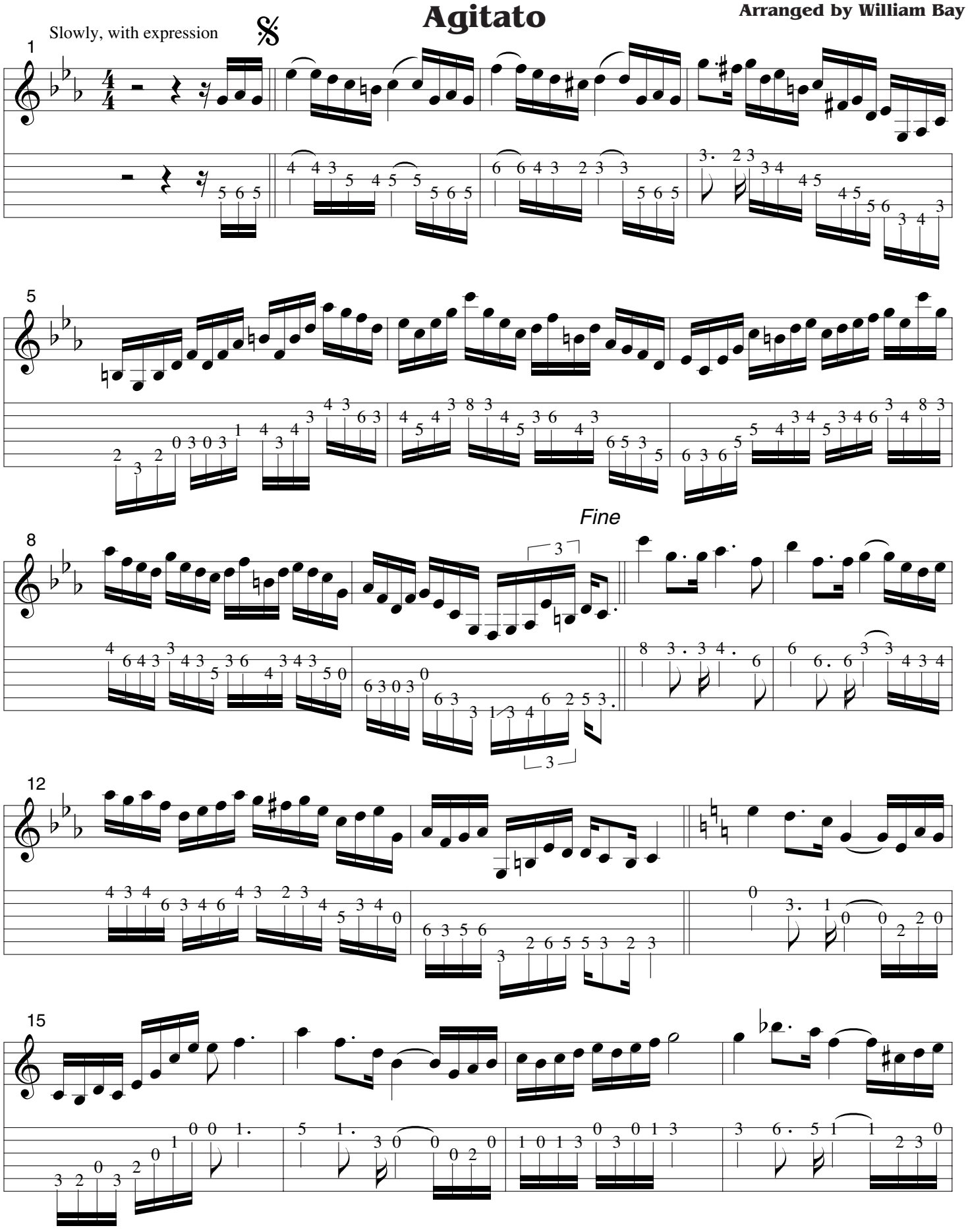
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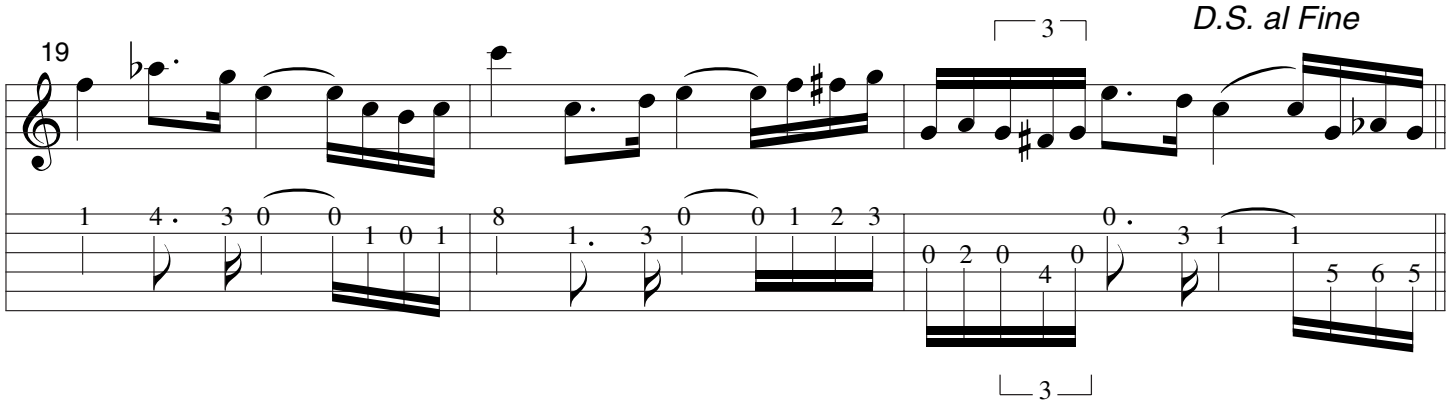
Agitato (con't)



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PICKIN' FIDDLE TUNES

by Adam Granger

A COUPLE OF OLD-TIMERS

Greetings, planar plectrists everywhere. Are you suffering from Stale Repertoire Syndrome? Do you play the same twenty tunes over and over again? If you hear yourself play *Red-Haired Boy* one more time, are you going to go stark raving mad? Is your spouse going to turn your guitar into a planter the next time she hears *St Anne's Reel* coming out of it? Well, take heart; Doctor Feelgood is here with fresh tunes! I present you with a couple of little-known-but-swell old-time tunes that you probably won't hear anyone else picking. They are a good fit: great tunes for the perfect instrument.

The *Key West Hornpipe* is a standard 32-bar tune from the *Cole's* collection (*nee Ryan's Mammoth Collection*. For more about this amazing collection, see the sidebar in my column for Volume 3, Number 2, or go and buy the Mel Bay edition, which includes Patrick Sky's great annotations.)

Flying Cloud, also known as *Flying Cloud Cotillion*, comes from a recording by West Coast duo Vern and Ray. It's a four part, 64-bar gem that playfully modulates its themes between the I and the V chords.

Okay, you guys: stop yer whining about being stale and let's pick some fresh musical produce!

READING *EASYTAB*

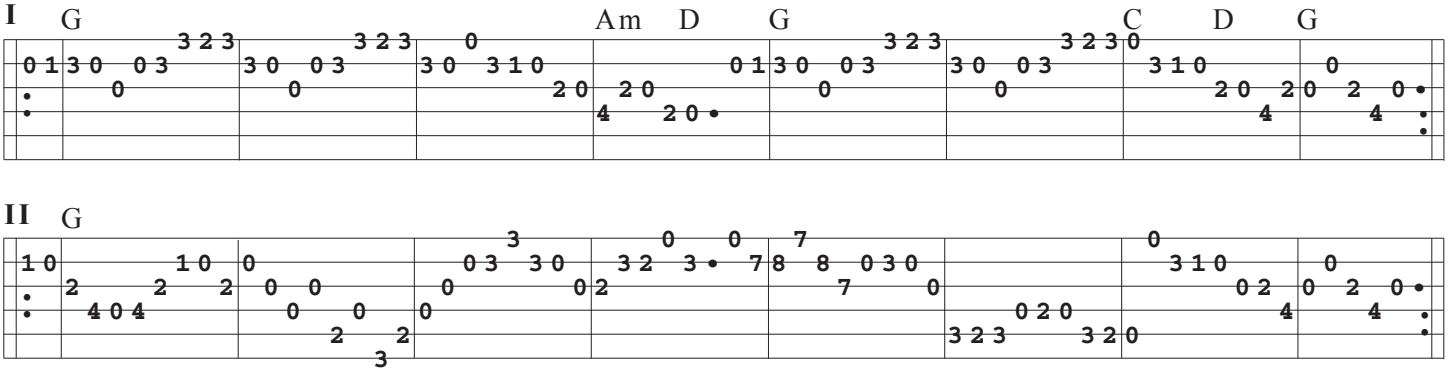
Easytab is like conventional tablature, except that timing notation has been streamlined and simplified. Since fiddle tunes are comprised mainly of eighth notes, *Easytab* uses the eighth note as its basic unit. An eighth rest is indicated by a dot. Therefore, a note with a dot after it is a quarter note, and a note with three dots after it is a half note. There are a total of eight notes and rests per measure.

FOR BEGINNERS

Pick with an alternating style: down-up-down-up-down-up etc. The first note of each measure should be a downstroke, the last an upstroke. **Include rests** in this alternating pattern. This keeps you "in synch", playing downstrokes on the beats, so that, no matter what the configuration of notes and rests in an eight-unit measure, the right hand plays them down-up-down-up-down-up-down-up.

KEY WEST HORNPIPE

KEY: G

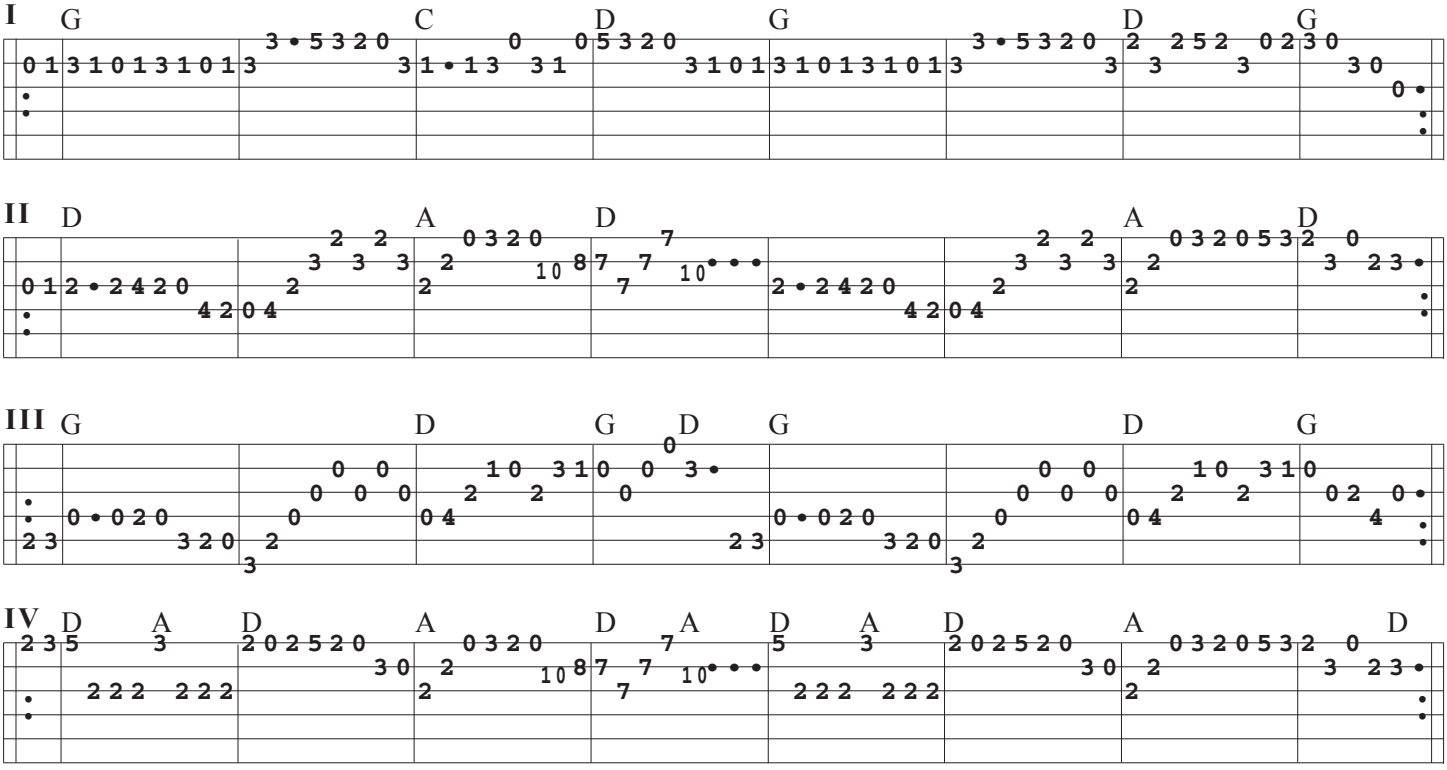


So, whadja think? The first part's fairly straight ahead, but what a gonzo roller coaster of a B part, eh? First, you've got the little cascade in the second measure, followed by an arpeggio which takes us back to the top. Then, in the fifth measure we go up the neck for four notes via floating (using an open string to change left-hand position during an uninterrupted string of eighth notes), and then float back down for a tonally surprising IV-chord bass run. We then just as abruptly jump back upstairs for the tag.

Those more attentive readers among you will note that the abovementioned four-note float part in the fifth-measure can be played in a lower position on the neck by playing 3-7-3 on the E string and 3 on the B. This is the way I pick this tune, but not everyone's hands are big enough to make a 3-7 reach. If you decide to pick it this way, be sure to flatten your index finger on those adjacent third-fret notes (If you're asking yourself why, see "A Brief Comment on Contiguous-String Unison-Fret Note Pairs" in my column for V3, N6). I encourage all of you to try it this way, and, if you're not quite making the reach, to spend a few minutes each day with the chromatic scale (see my column "Exercises, Technique and Form" from V2, N1).

THE FLYING CLOUD COTILLION

KEY: G



Repeat I, once or twice (see "about modulations", below)

Well, don't keep me breathless; how'd it go? As mentioned, this tune modulates between G and D. As a result, there are a lot of G scale notes in the first and third parts and a lot of D scale notes—0s, 2s, 4s and 5s—in the second and fourth parts. (If you don't know the D scale, see my column "First Position Scales" in V3, N1.) You're going to want to play those in second position (*i.e.*, between the second and fifth frets).

Note that in the fourth measures of the second and fourth parts, we have another floating situation on our hands. Unlike the one in *Key West Hornpipe*, this phrase cannot be played off of the third fret, because we start on a second-fret note and end at a seventh-fret note.

ABOUT MODULATIONS:
Most musical pieces end on the same chord as the key they're in. We are so accustomed to hearing this that it actually makes us grumpy when we don't. Since part IV above modulated (changed) to D, which is the V chord of G, we've got to set things straight before we end, or it will sound weirder than Ralph Stanley rapping. We therefore go back to the first part, in the root key.

HEY ADAM, ENOUGH WITH THE BACK ISSUES, ALREADY!

It has probably not been lost on you that I have invited you four times in this column to refer to past columns of mine (and I ain't done yet!) Implicit in that invitation is to buy whatever back issues of *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* you don't own. Genre-specific column-driven how-to magazines like *Flatpicking Guitar Magazine* often publish the most basic information—the essence—about the genre their early issues. This is doubly true of my columns, in which I've discussed dozens of important, essential topics that I don't want to have to repeat in later columns. It is for that reason that I refer you intrepid readers to back issues, and it is in that spirit that I encourage you to buy those issues while they're still available.

All right, there you have it: two new fresh tunes to bring into your jam session, band, and/or personal repertoire. There are good sources for new, seldom-played tunes. My book, *Granger's Fiddle Tunes for Guitar*, is the largest tab collection of fiddle tunes. My bud Steve Kaufman also has good collections available, as does David Brody (be aware, however, that his *Guitar Player's Fake Book* presents all tunes in uncapoed settings). If you're lucky enough to read music, there are dozens of good collections, among them the earlier mentioned *Cole's/Ryan's* and, for Irish music fans, *O'Neill's Music of Ireland* by Miles Krassen (which I discuss in V4 N3). In other words, there's absolutely no excuse for not adding to your repertoire as your boredom and discontent dictate.

Adam Granger has had two surgeries in his life: The first was to sew up his hand after he split it open by impaling himself on a clothesline hook when in the fourth grade. The second was to remove a drill bit from his foot. The next day, he had to drive 800 miles from Oklahoma to Minnesota to play a concert with Alan Munde.

Adam has a typically male aversion to visiting the doctor; he hasn't been in six years.

WHAT IS A FLOATING LICK?

We have received a number of questions via email and phone regarding the technique known as "floating." Beginning players have heard the term used in the flatpicking context, but are unclear as to exactly what is meant when someone refers to a "floating" lick.

Since Scott Fore displayed a great example of a floating lick in his arrangement of "Ragtime Annie" (see page 31—measures 6, 14, & 22), and Orrin Star and John McGann both used floating licks in their columns in this issue, we thought this issue would be a good one to try and give those readers who are unfamiliar with this technique another example to look at in an effort to clear up any confusion.

"Floating" is a technique, usually performed up-the-neck, whereby one tries to combine fretted notes with open notes in order to achieve a sustained ringing, piano-like effect. When the fretted notes are played in conjunction with the open notes, and the open notes are allowed to ring for as long as possible, the floating effect is achieved. To get a clearer idea, it is best to look at an example.

The first phrase below is a standard flatpicking phrase that most everyone will be familiar with. It is often used as an ending phrase, however, it is also commonly used as the opening phrase to the tune "Huckleberry Hornpipe." If we take this same sequence of notes and play them up-the-neck as a floating lick, the phrase would look like the second phrase shown below. Try both licks and compare the sound.

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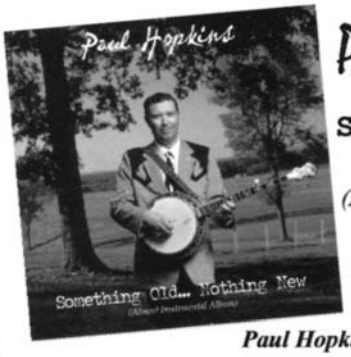

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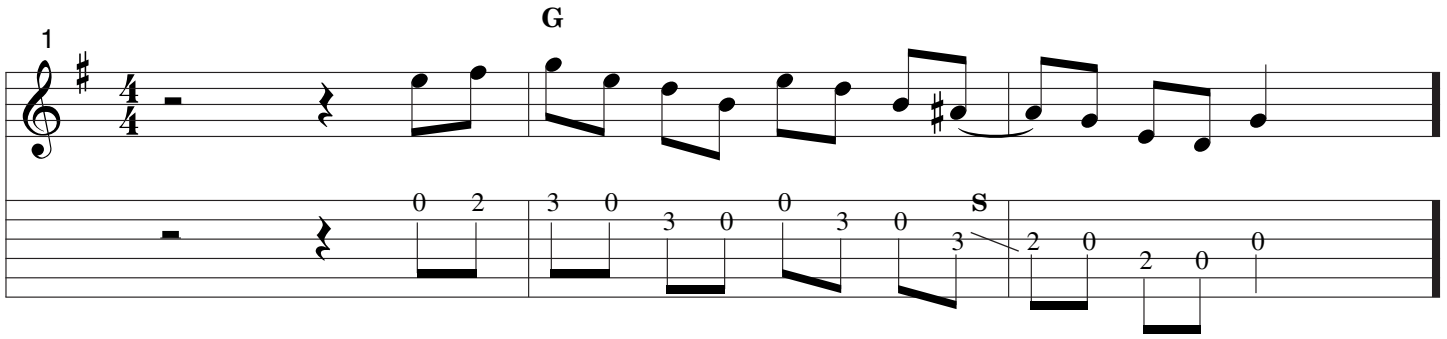
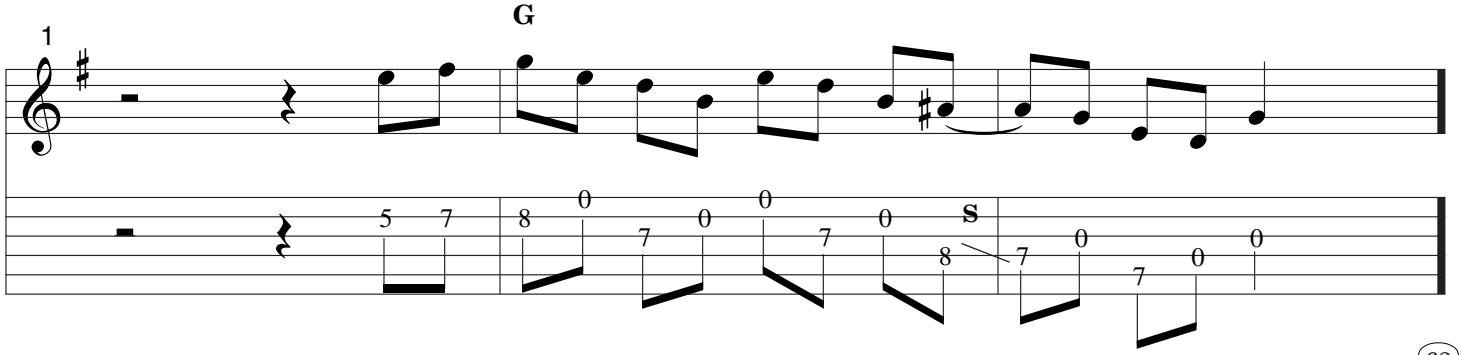
As you can see, the notes are exactly the same, however, the sound is quite different. You can use this to great effect in your playing. Take some of your favorite phrases, go up the neck, and try to make them "float."

Standard Phrase



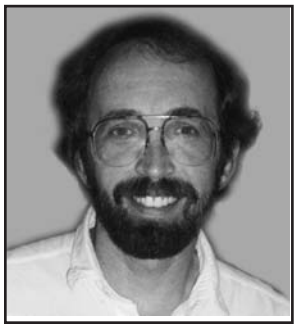
Floating Phrase



Exploring Bluegrass Guitar

Clarence White Classics

by Steve Pottier



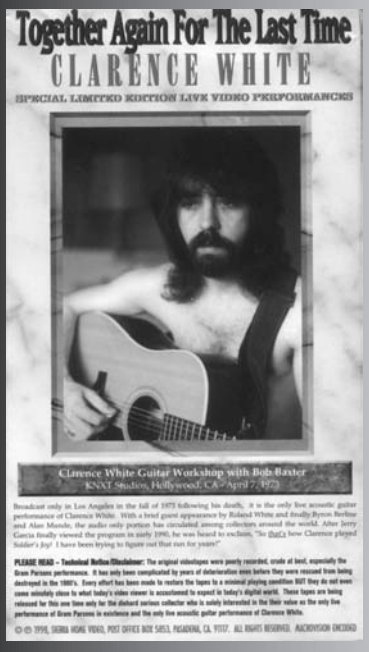
"I Might Take You Back Again"

All of 16 years old, Clarence recorded this song on the Briar label for the Kentucky Colonels' album *The New Sounds of Bluegrass America* in 1962. John Delgatto, in his insert notes accompanying this reissue, notes that Ralph and Carter Stanley were "commissioned" to oversee the production of the album, with Carter doing some of the engineering! Roland White was away in the army, and Leroy McNees was the leader of the band at the time. Leroy wrote this song, and most of the others tracks on the record.

The slower tempo of "I Might Take You Back Again" allowed for some ear-boggling syncopation in later performances. In this recording there are hints of that with the anticipation at the beginning of the break (end of measure 2) and off beat melody (beginning of measure 6). This solo also shows off some Clarence White staples, like the use of the slides in G (measure 5), the double stop slide in measure 8 and the triplet figures in measures 9 and 10. The end measure 8 is a downward brush "aiming" at the last note, the note on the open E string, an idea which Clarence would later use on "Footprints in the Snow."

Clarence's second break is very close to this one, except at the end where he hangs in the G chord, echoing Earl Scruggs playing "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy." He always seemed able and willing to incorporate his roots as well as his innovations into his solos. As with most of Clarence's solos, the melody is prominent, and when you break it down, it doesn't require lighting speed or a knowledge of esoteric scales, it is just a beautiful and elegant piece of guitar music. Sometimes those quarter notes sound just fine!

Clarence White on Video!



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See Clarence White up close picking some of the tunes he made famous: Wildwood Flower, Listen to the Mockingbird, The Crawdad Song, I Am A Pilgrim, Soldier's Joy, and Sally Goodin'. As an added bonus this video features a performance by Gram Parsons and Emmy Lou Harris.

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I Might Take You Back Again

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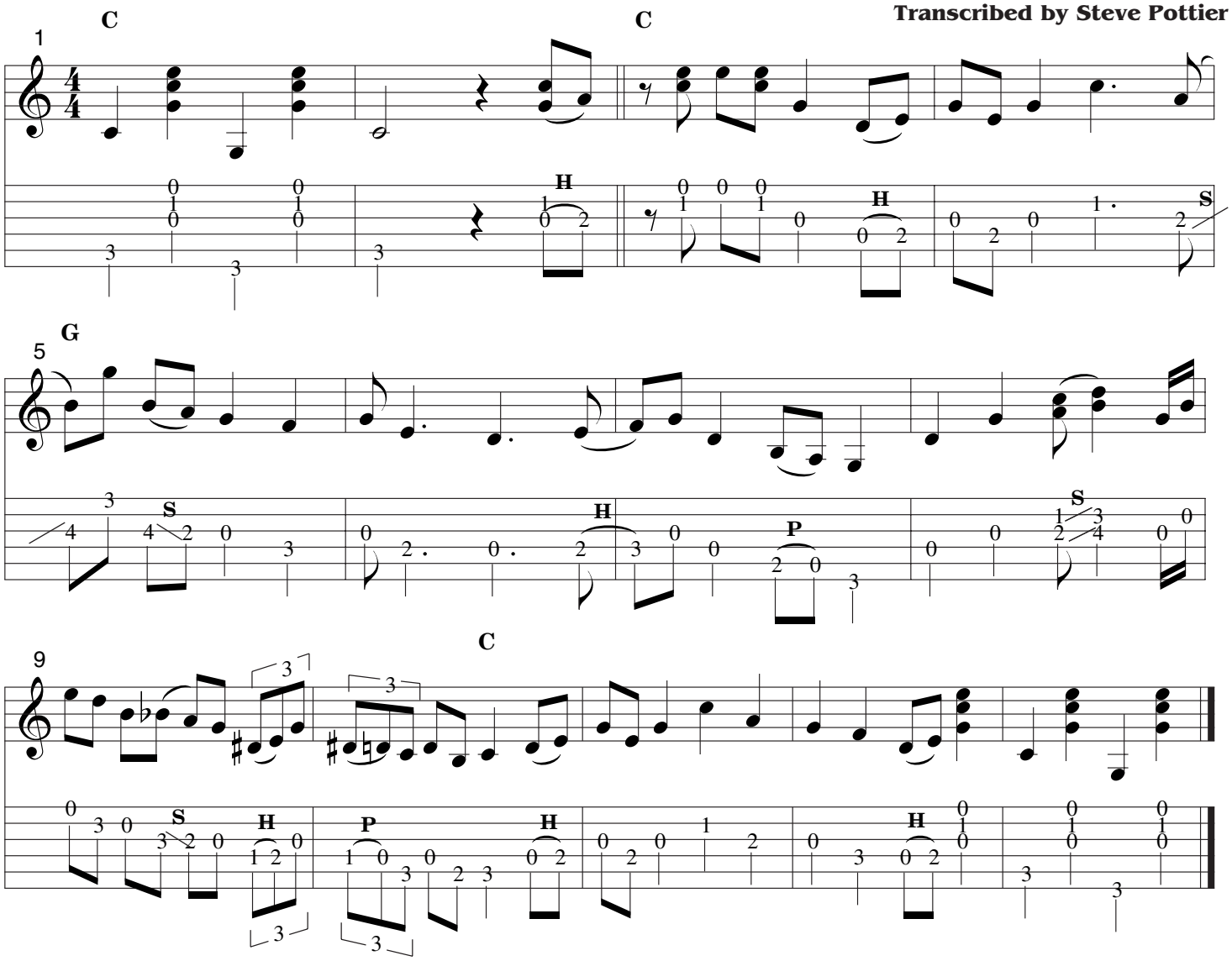
Orrin Star's

Flatpicking Guitar Primer

What The Tab Won't Tell You

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Additionally, Wyatt is shown improvisationally accompanying various instruments (banjo, fiddle, guitar, mandolin) and then analyzing what he has done to provide the rhythmic foundation behind each instrument. Also featured are guest appearances by: Rickie Simpkins on fiddle (Sally Goodin' and Dusty Miller) and mandolin (Big Country and I Wonder Where You Are Tonight), Sammy Shelor on banjo (Ground Speed and Whitewater), Kenny Smith on guitar (Goodbye, Liza Jane and Bill Cheathum) and Tony Rice (Waltz for Indira, Manzanita, and Devlin). Wyatt provides guitar accompaniment to each of these artists and then analyzes the techniques he has employed.

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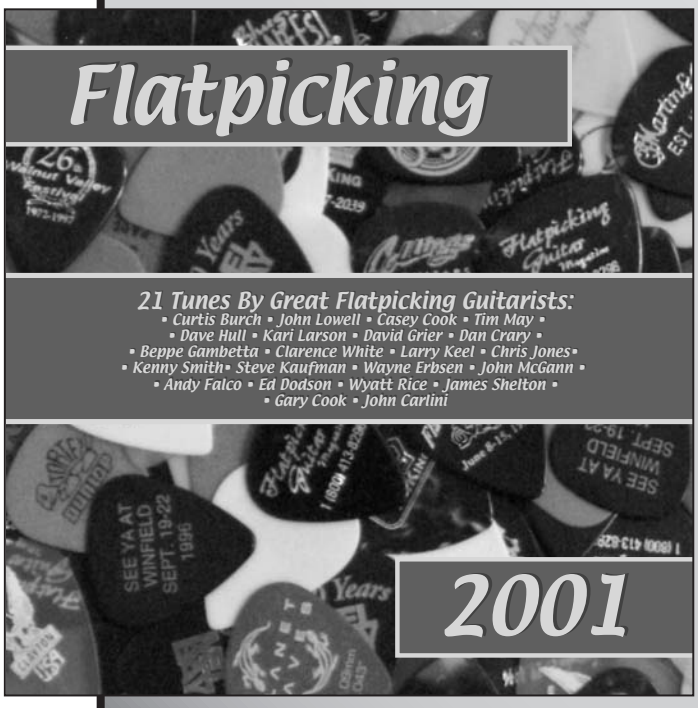
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9 *Jerry's Farewell* **Larry Keel**
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John McGann's Eclectic Acoustic

Monkey Puzzle

Here's a fun tune that has some deep bluesy bluegrass roots, yet is some sort of mutant form that, well, we don't know what it is, either. Mandolinist Chris Moore's melody was created without any preconceived ideas of timing. Instead of a planned, "wouldn't it be cool to start in 3/4 and then go to 4/4," it's a totally intuitive process, and it just sounds that way. My job was to come up with chords and rhythm section concepts. On the *Snows of March* CD, we play this tune quite a bit slower than we do live, and added the intro and middle parts (not notated here).

I arranged the A part with "floating," playing consecutive scale notes on non-adjacent strings (much like melodic banjo technique), as I liked the sound and feel. The B part combines bluegrass and funk. The C section brings things down dynamically. We end with the A section.

I hope you'll enjoy exploring this Darwinistic tone poem.

John McGann (www.johnmcgann.com) is a member of Wayfaring Strangers, whose debut CD with Andy Statman, Matt Glaser, Tony Trischka and several guest vocalists has recently been released on Rounder. He is performing around New England and New York with Rust Farm as well as traditional Irish masters Joe Derrane and Seamus Connolly.

Monkey Puzzle

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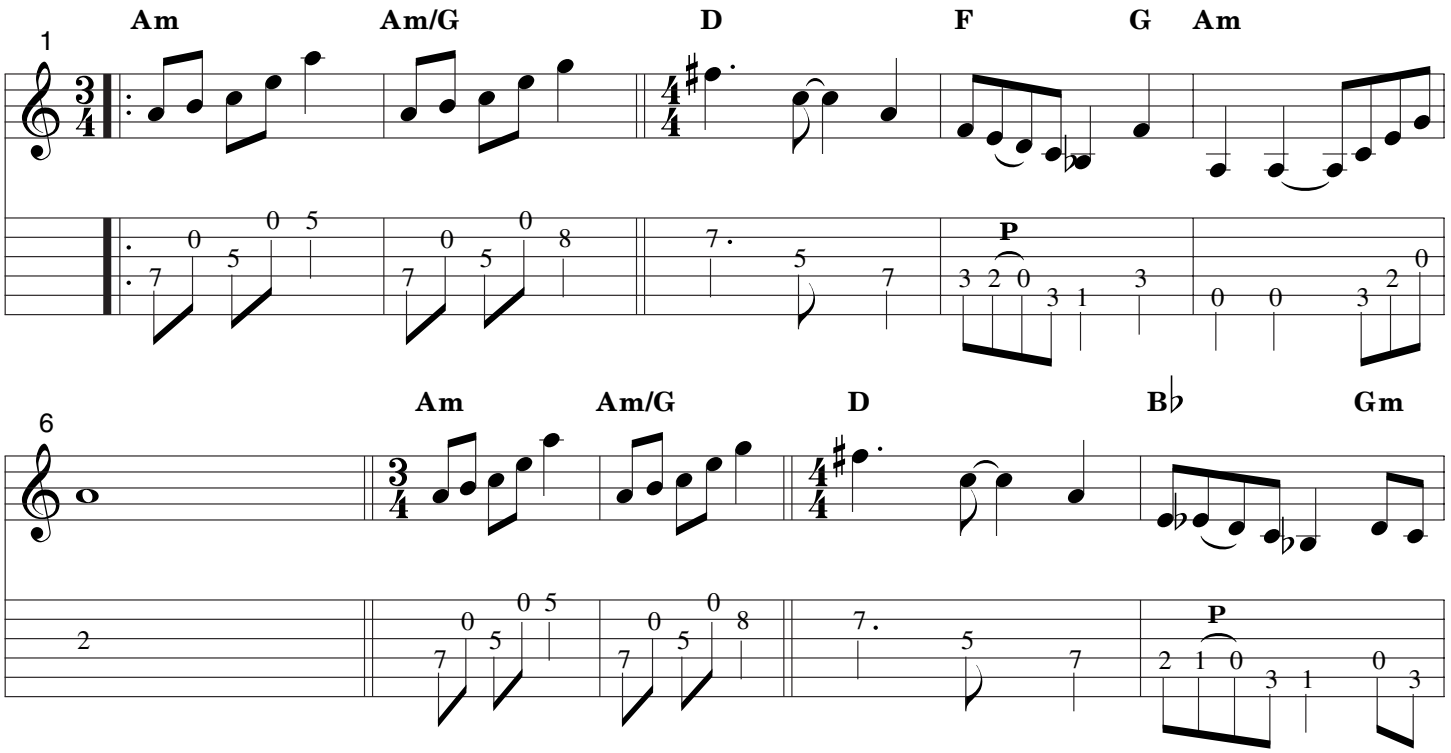
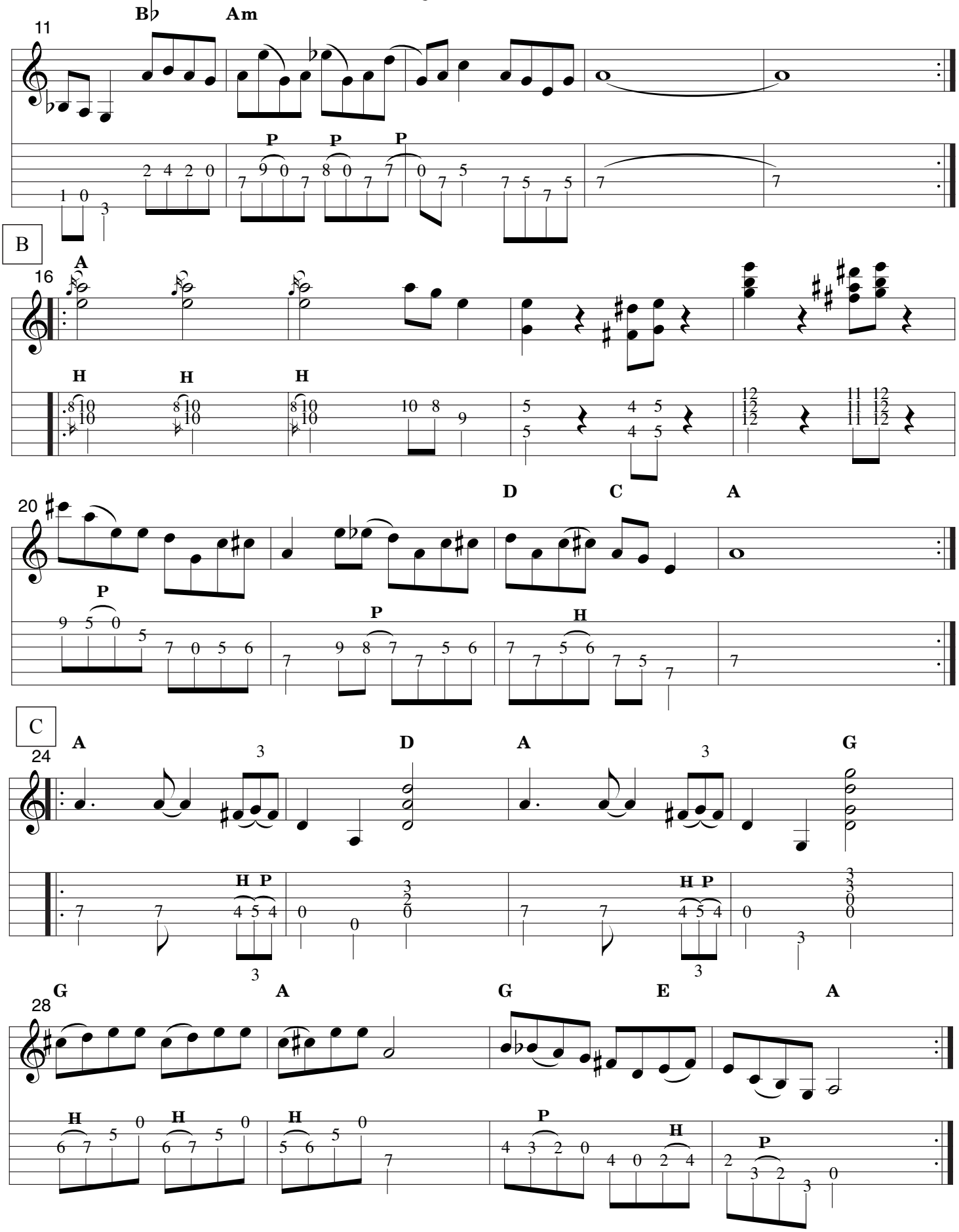
Luminous Bloom/ASCAP



Monkey Puzzle (con't)

New Release Highlight

Eric Lewis and Andy Ratliff: *Edgar's Blues*

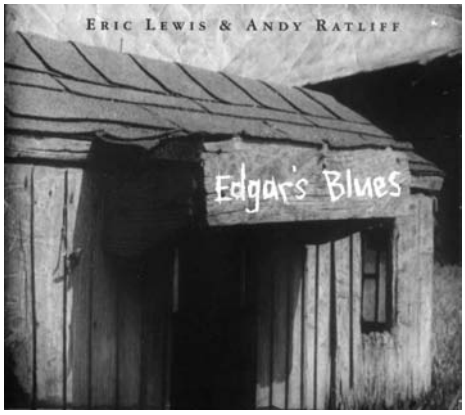
by Dan Miller

Putting out a CD that features flatpicking guitar and choosing "Salt Creek" as the first tune takes some guts. Think about it—all the really great players have already recorded this tune. What else is there to say that hasn't been eloquently stated by the masters? Those who record the tune today, who don't posess the subtle skill to pull it off like the masters, often try to impress the listener with a rapid stream of guitar pyrotechnics. Similarly, at jam session and in contests, pickers usually play tunes like "Salt Creek" too fast with too many machine gun barrages of hot licks. Sure, the tune is fun to play at a jam, but if you are going to record why not do something new and different?

When I received a CD in the mail several weeks ago from the flatpicking duo of Eric Lewis and Andy Ratliff and saw that the first song on the CD was "Salt Creek," my initial reaction was, "Here we go again." However, I always try to give every CD a fresh listen and adhere to the maxim that "you can't judge a book by its cover, or a CD by its song list" so I put the disc in the machine to give it a listen.

As the disc began to spin and the opening notes of "Salt Creek" reached my ears I was pleasantly surprised: these two were picking "Salt Creek" at a nice moderate tempo. "Bravo!" I thought. "These guys are actually playing at a tempo that suits the guitar's vocal range and their skill level!" Further listening revealed that they were also playing very tasteful renditions of the melody. On this disc, the performers opted to set aside flash and speed on a tune where flash and speed are the norm. It was very effective and pleasing. "Salt Creek" has a great melody and the strength of its melody becomes more prominent on the guitar when the tune is played at something other than light speed. OK, Eric and Andy, you certainly got my attention.

The next song on the disc is the old Stanley Brothers classic "Think of What You've Done" sung in the style of the old brother duets. The music of the Monroe Brothers, the Blue Sky Boys, and the Delmore Brothers is among my favorites.



Eric and Andy are both strong vocalists and their voices blend very well together. Now they not only had my attention, but as I continued listening I was looking through the literature that came with the CD to find out how to contact these guys. By the end of the record, I was dialing the phone.

On the third and fourth tunes Eric steps out to display his talents as a multi-instrumentalist. The third tune is an instrumental written by Eric called "Calicoon Rag." It is a moderately paced swing-style number. Andy provides a "sock" rhythm accompaniment to Eric's lead guitar and mandolin solos. The fourth tune is the traditional instrumental "Old Mother Flanigan." Andy stays with the guitar on this one while Eric takes solos on the fiddle and resonator guitar.

On the fifth tune we get another chance to hear brother duet style singing on "Katie Dear." Andy plays guitar and sings lead while Eric plays mandolin. The vocal presentation on this mournful song is superb. Their vocal delivery has accurately portrayed the emotion of this song and provides a soulful expression of the lyrics. "Howlin' Edgar," the sixth tune, is a haunting instrumental written by Andy and named for his basset hound. Andy plays guitar and mandolin on this one while Eric plays the resonator guitar. The instrumental arrangement and execution provides a great groove and feel.

The seventh tune "Tennessee Barn Burner" is the first up-tempo number on the CD. Written by Eric, it is the only song (other than "Salt Creek") where Eric and Andy both give us flatpick guitar solos. We have chosen this tune to transcribe in the magazine and include on the audio CD, so you can take a listen to this one for yourself. Eric takes the first solo and Andy takes the second. Eric says, "I kept it straight and then Andy improvised. We cut this one live. Andy plays the harmony on the twin part."

While the first seven tracks stay fairly close to the bluegrass style, tracks eight through ten move the CD in a different direction. Eric describes the duo's music as being "somewhere between bluegrass and old-time," and these tracks display the old-time side of their talents. Track eight, "The Kaintuck," is an a capella number written by Andy. Andy sings lead, Eric sings tenor, and John Riley sings high baritone. Track nine, also written by Andy, is an old-timey sounding instrumental called "Preserve the Blameless." Andy plays the clawhammer banjo on this one while Eric plays guitar and resonator guitar. Track ten is an old-timey treatment of the classic "In The Pines." Andy plays mandolin and Eric plays guitar.

On track eleven Eric and Andy allow their rock and roll roots to show through on "Reuben's Country Blues Train." Andy plays lead guitar and a bowed Les Paul while Eric also plays a bowed Les Paul. Jeff Powell plays the "magic box." Andy said, "I grew up playing classic rock. Something that pulled me into acoustic music was the acoustic songs performed by Led Zepplin." Imagine Led Zepplin playing "Rueben's Train," and you'll have a feel for Andy and Eric's treatment of this tune.

Song twelve is another instrumental written by Eric. Eric plays lead guitar and it is a bluegrass sounding number, however, Andy plays the clawhammer banjo here, so you definitely get that "bluegrass meets old-time" feel on this one. On track thirteen we get another brother-style duet with "Short Life of Trouble."

The last tune on CD is a reprise of "Howlin' Edgar" and features Edgar himself as a special guest vocalist. Eric explains

Eric Lewis (left) and Andy Ratliff

that when Andy first showed this tune to him he played the chords on the guitar and whistled the melody. Andy's basset hound began howling along with the song. They decided that Edgar's howling needed to be recorded for posterity. Edgar shines here as Andy and Eric provide whistling accompaniment.

On this recording Andy Ratliff and Eric Lewis display songwriting, vocal, and instrumental talents that one might hear from artists who have spent a lifetime playing bluegrass and old-time music. After listening to the recording I was surprised to find out that they are both about thirty (Andy is 29 and Eric is 32) and that neither of them have been playing acoustic music more than seven or eight years.

Although Andy and Eric did not meet until 1995, they share very similar musical backgrounds. Both grew up in the south (Eric near Knoxville, Andy in Tupelo), both were exposed to traditional music as youngsters, and both pursued electric guitars and rock and roll music prior to becoming interested in acoustic music and bluegrass while in their twenties.

Eric Lewis has played the guitar since he was ten years old, and had two influential teachers in his early years. Chris Kirkland taught him blues and rock and roll and Benjamin Bolt, a classical student of Segovia, taught him classical guitar. While in college at Memphis State, Eric studied music theory and jazz guitar while playing in a blues band. After college Eric got a number of band and session jobs playing everything from alternative rock guitar to country lap steel.

In 1992 Eric was on the road playing the electic guitar when he read Stanley Booth's book *True Adventures of the Rolling Stones*. In the book Booth mentions Gram Parsons and Eric became interested in Gram's music. That lead him to explore the music of the musicians who influenced Parsons—Hank Williams, Bill Monroe, and the Louvin Brothers. Further explorations lead him to bluegrass. Eric says, "I was exposed to this music when I was young. My mother had a Dreadnought guitar and could play 'Wildwood Flower.' But I didn't come to appreciate it until I was older." Eric states that now most all of the music he plays is acoustic-oriented bluegrass, country, old-time, and folk.

Andy Ratliff's uncle played in a country band and tried to teach Andy how to play the guitar when he was in fifth grade. Andy says, "My guitar had high action and it was hard to play. I knew a few chords, but I had a hard time switching between them. I didn't stick with it." When he was a senior in high school a friend of Andy's got a guitar for Christmas. He says, "I sat in my friend's room with a chord book for hours. I got hooked."

Although the first bands Andy played in where playing classic rock, he says that he was always pulled toward the acoustic side of rock music. "The acoustic guitar played flatpick style is one of the most beautiful things—it just pulls me in," he remarks. Andy's interest in the Grateful Dead led him to find the *Old and In The Way* project. That recording led him to the discovery of Peter Rowan and David Grisman. Exploration of Grisman's Dawg music led him to a guitar picker named Tony Rice. Andy says, "By the time I was 21 I had started listening to bluegrass and I was attempting to play it. By the time I was 22, that is all I did." In addition to playing bluegrass on the guitar, Andy bought a banjo and began learning the old-time clawhammer banjo style. Andy says, "I went from punk rock to banjo."

Both Eric and Andy admit to having to overcome a few difficulties in transitioning from electric to the acoustic guitar. Andy says, "The attack is different. Since there are no amps you have to let the instrument talk and you have to make it project. I had never approached the guitar like that. Flatpicking is more technically demanding. I had to dig down and work harder. When I started to see improvement it was a great feeling. It hooked me." Andy admits that his first exposure to flatpicking came via a Doc Watson CD that he received a couple of years before he attempted the technique. "When I first heard Doc, I wasn't going to even attempt it. I couldn't fathom what he was doing."

Regarding his transition from electric to acoustic guitar Eric says, "The first adjustment I had to make was finding a pick that made the guitar sound good. With an acoustic guitar there is a balance between volume and good tone." Eric notes that his first influence on the acoustic guitar was Tony Rice: "I liked the fact that Tony was doing jazz stuff. The way he approached things caught my ear." He says that he now also enjoys listening to Kenny Smith and Bryan Sutton. Andy points to Tony Rice, Clarence White, Norman Blake, and David Grier as influences.

During the mid-1990s both Andy and Eric were living in Memphis. Andy was playing with a band called Professor Elixir's Southern Troubadors. In addition to playing in a rock band, Eric was performing in an acoustic duo at Murphy's, a "mid-town Memphis hole-in-the-wall." Andy's future brother-in-law was a fan of Eric's playing and invited Andy to come to the club and hear him play. Andy said, "When I heard Eric I said to myself, 'Man, I've got to get

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this guy playing some bluegrass!' I invited him to come to the house and pick and he took right to it. He had a strong technique and he picked things up really fast."

Eric recalls, "A friend of mine told me, 'You need to meet this guy who dates my sister. He plays guitar.' I wasn't really excited about it at first, but when I met Andy and found out that he played guitar, banjo, mandolin, and fiddle it really sparked my interest because I didn't know anyone who played that stuff." Andy and Eric got together several times over the course of the next year. When Andy and the mandolin player from Professor Elixir, Michael Graber, wanted to form a bluegrass band, they asked Eric to join. They called the band Fatback Jubilee.

Fatback Jubilee stayed together for about three years playing mostly local gigs in the Memphis area. When the band broke up, Andy moved to Nashville where his wife entered college and Eric went on the road playing electric guitar, lap steel, pedal steel and mandolin with Cheri Knight, an alt rock/alt country performer. After touring with Knight for six months, Eric got a job as a cast member of the Patsy Cline Show and toured with them for six months. After a brief stay in Nashville Eric got a job in Fish Creek, Wisconsin, as part of the American Folklore Theatre. There he played guitar, fiddle, Dobro, and mandolin in what he describes as folk/comedy/drama original theater.

In 1999 Eric released the CD *Heritage* which featured country, bluegrass, old-time, and Celtic music. The group of friends who played on the CD with Eric, including Andy Ratliff, got together for a show in Wisconsin to celebrate the project's release. Someone in the audience recorded a bootleg and the tape was so good Eric decided to release it. The second project, *Live In Fish Creek* was released in 2000.

From March 2000 through March 2001 Eric played Dobro in Robin and Linda Williams' band as well as touring with Andy. They decided that if they were going to tour together it would be nice to have a project which featured the music they played in their show. In the fall of 2000, they started getting the material together for *Edgar's Blues*. Eric says that he and Andy are both fans of the music Doc Watson and Bill Monroe made together as well as the music of the Monroe Brothers, the Louvin Brothers, and the Blue Sky Boys. With this project they wanted to honor that music by doing something in that style. They also wanted the album to have a balance by showing what each of them could do in terms of their writing, singing, and playing various instruments.

I believe that Andy and Eric acheived the balance that they were looking for in this project and I think that the balance they were able to acheive in displaying all of their incredible talent and versatility is its strength. Their love for traditional country, bluegrass, and old-time music is evident on every cut. It is obvious that they have studied the old masters, but they are not strictly copying what has been done before. Their music is fresh and ancient at the same time.

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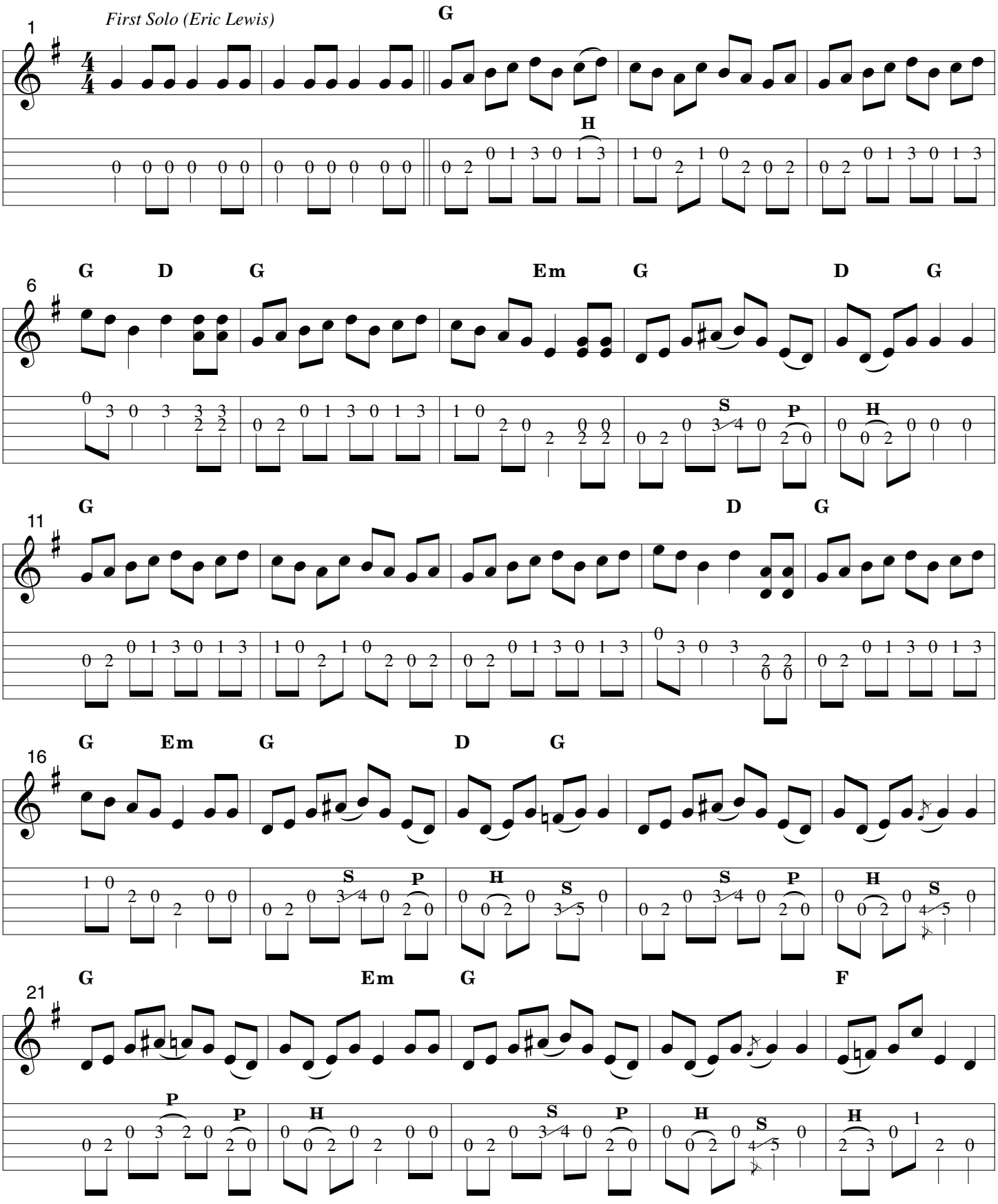
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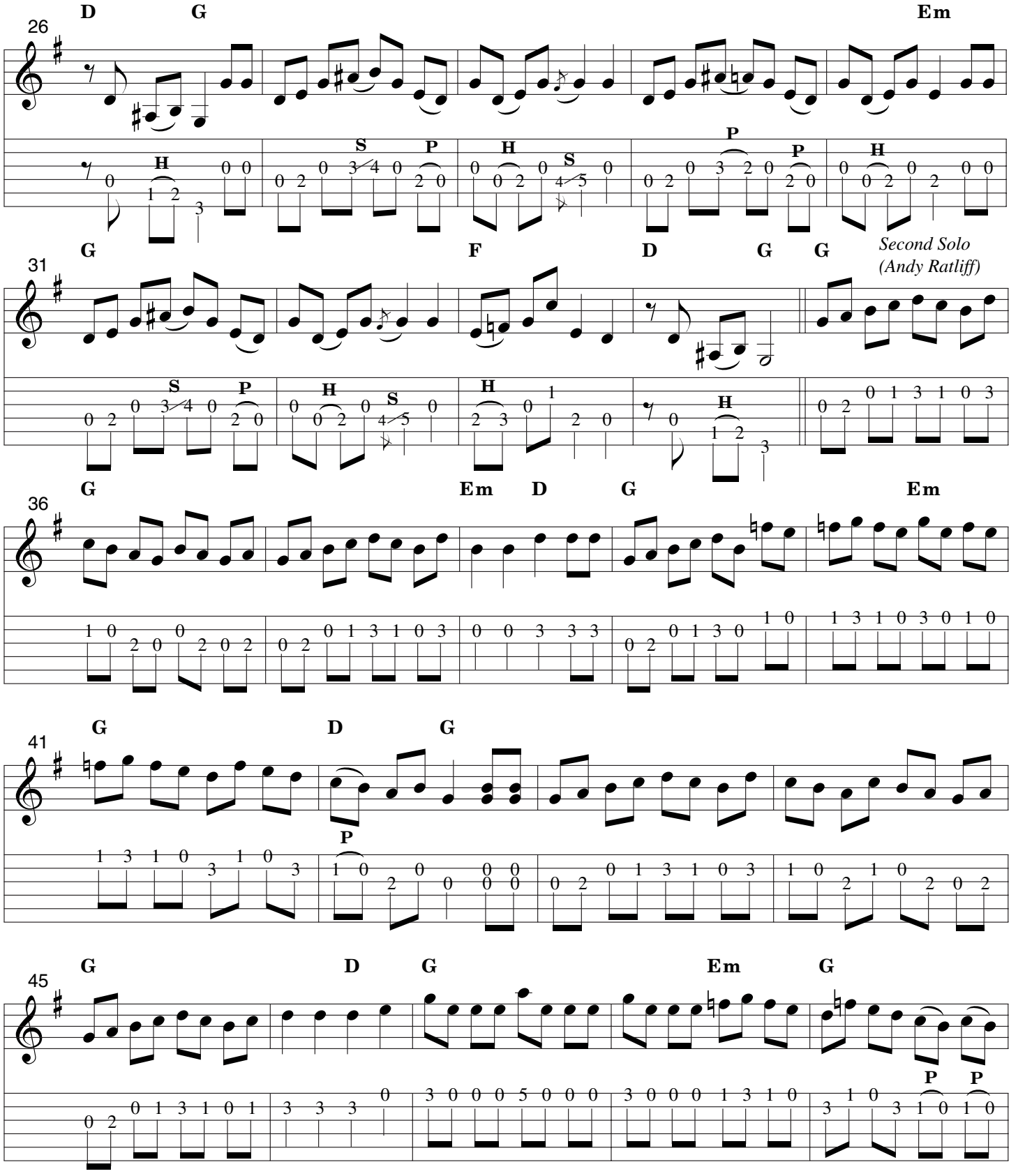
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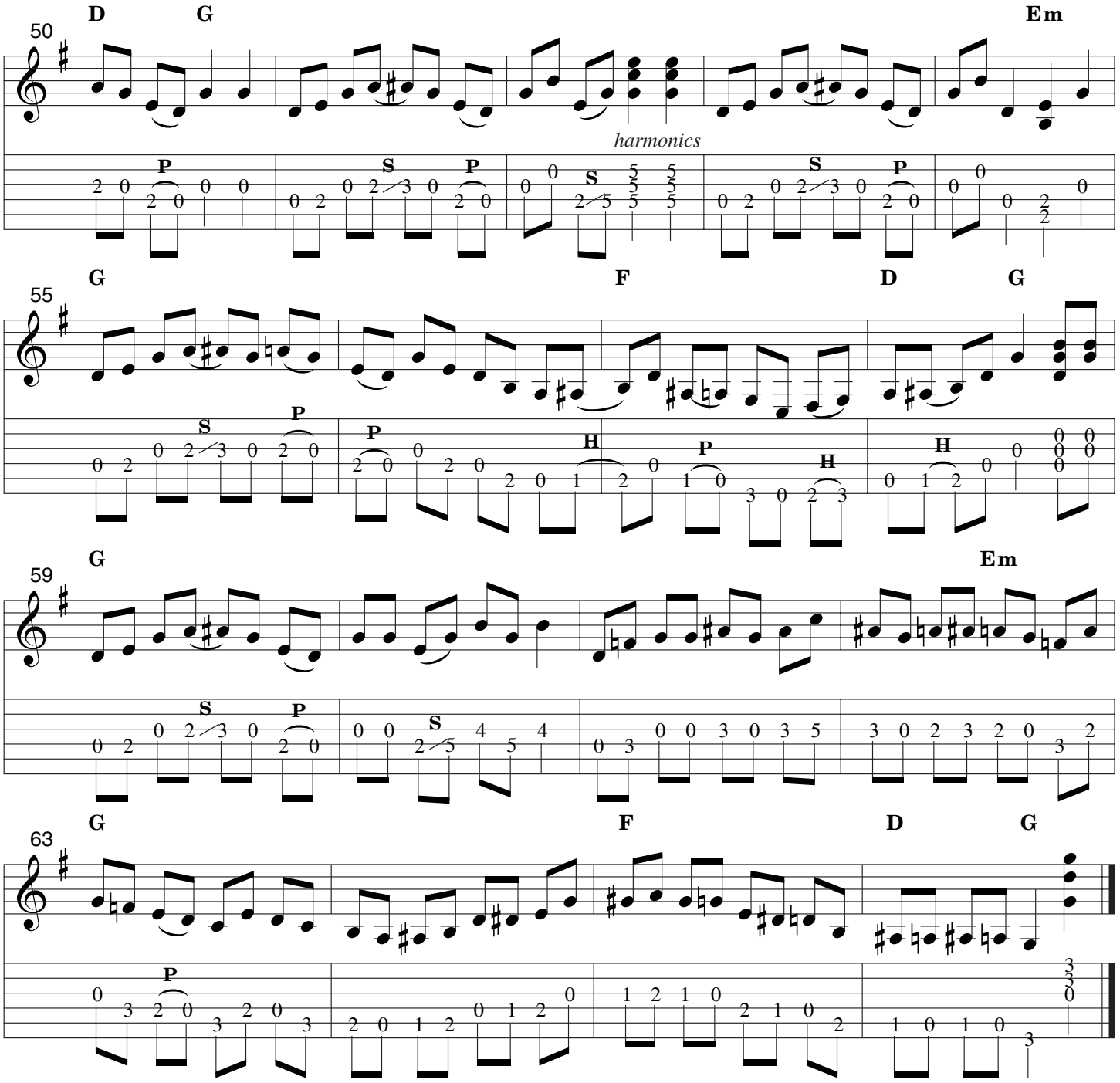
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CD Reviews

New Favorite
Alison Kraus + Union Station

Reviewed by
Christopher Thiessen

The artist's prerogative is to expand the envelope, so don't expect standard bluegrass when you slip this CD into the player. That's not to say that *New Favorite* doesn't contain at least three or four traditional-sounding tunes. But Alison Krauss's job is to introduce her fans to as many new musical experiences as possible in the span of a 45-minute CD. That may not be to everyone's taste, but it's worth the price of admission.

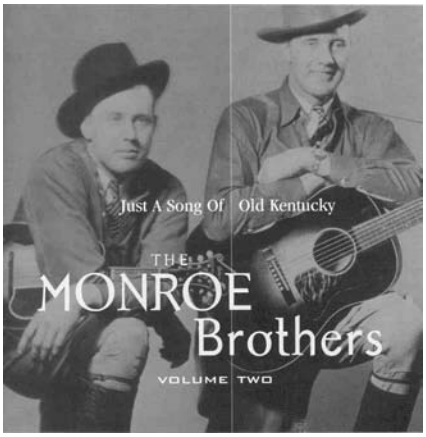
Union Station is a wonderfully mature and confident band. From the full-tilt instrumental "Choctaw Hayride" to incredibly tasteful backup work on "I'm Gone," "The Lucky One," or "New Favorite," these folks are listening hard to each other and striving to put just the right musical accent in any tune. Whether a flatpicked lead by Dan Tyminski or Ron Block or solid rhythm guitar work in a slow ballad, ensemble excellence prevails. Add Barry Bale's clockwork bass, Ron's work on banjo, and Jerry Douglas's lyrical Dobro work to melodically stitch it all together, and Union Station has few equals. I was particularly delighted by the interchange between Jerry's leads and Alison's fiddle as they play against each other deep in the background of these tunes.

Vocally, Alison Krause is a challenge to folks who have hard-held preconceptions about "bluegrass vocalists." Her voice has lost some of its outright sweetness in favor of additional expression (listen to "Let Me Touch You for Awhile"), but BG vocal fundamentalists may feel more comfortable with Ron's vocals on "The Boy Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn" or Dan singing "Bright Sunny South" or "Mamma Cried." In fact, their hackles might immediately rise when Alison sings the Dan Fogelberg tune "Stars," or when she performs the Joni Mitchell-esque tunes "I'm Gone or Daylight." Bluegrass? Yes and no. Country? Perhaps. Maybe even a bit of pop or jazz. Leaving at least one foot expertly planted in the musical roots from which she came, Alison continues to move her musical vision forward.

It comes down to this: the music of Alison Krauss and Union Station rejects easy categorization. That's that same "problem" purists had with the Seldom Scene: when you push the artistic envelope, you cause people to think about the music, to listen to the lyrics, and to appreciate it even though it may be different. Many of the instructors at the recent Roanoke Bluegrass Weekend indicated that if you weren't listening to a wide variety of music (not just bluegrass), you were shortchanging your musical education. *New Favorite* just helps us all along that path.

Song list: Let Me Touch You for Awhile, The Boy Who Wouldn't Hoe Corn, The Lucky One, Choctaw Hayride, Crazy Faith, Momma Cried, I'm Gone, Daylight, Bright Sunny South, Stars, It All Comes Down to You, Take Me For Longing, New Favorite.

The Monroe Brothers: Volume 2: Just a Song of Old Kentucky
(Rounder 82161-1074-2)
The Monroe Brothers



Reviewed by
Christopher Thiessen

Each of us has at least one recording that hooked us on this music. For some, it's Rounder 0044: *JD Crowe and the New South* (admittedly a must-have for anyone's collection). In 1975 I bought a copy of *Feast Here Tonight*, which was at that time the cleanest single compilation of the Monroe Brothers' legendary Bluebird recordings. Even though the LPs didn't have the complete 60 sides, that didn't matter. I could finally hear Charlie Monroe's guitar intertwining with Bill's jaw-droppingly fast mandolin work, all wrapped around

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the brotherly vocals. Charlie Monroe had incorporated Riley Puckett's runs into a new style that was more than simple backup but not yet flatpicking. In their fast tunes ("Long Journey Home," "Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms," or "Watermelon Hangin' On the Vine") the Monroes foreshadowed bluegrass; their slow ballads ("What Is a Home Without Love" or "Just a Song of Old Kentucky," now a bit too sentimental to our jaded early-21st century sensibilities but no less brilliant musically) rooted them in the musical traditions of the previous century. To paraphrase Alan Lomax, this was "old-timey music in overdrive."

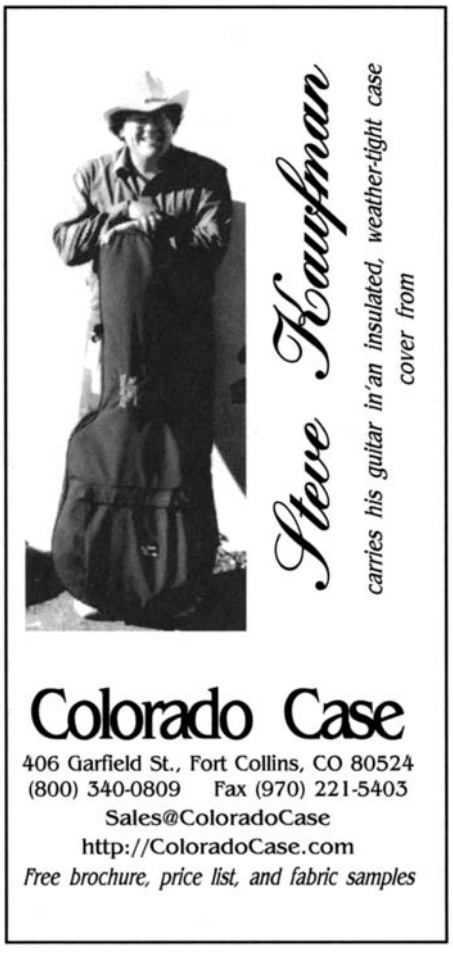
In the late 80s or early 90s a Japanese label released a multi-CD set of the Bluebird recordings. Although the recording quality was no better than that of the LPs and several cuts were not included, a CD version was a major temptation, even with the Japanese liner notes. But a year or so later posts began to circulate on Flatpick-L and Comando-L that Rounder was in negotiations to locate and use all 60 original RCA recordings, and would bring in a major bluegrass scholar to write the liner notes.

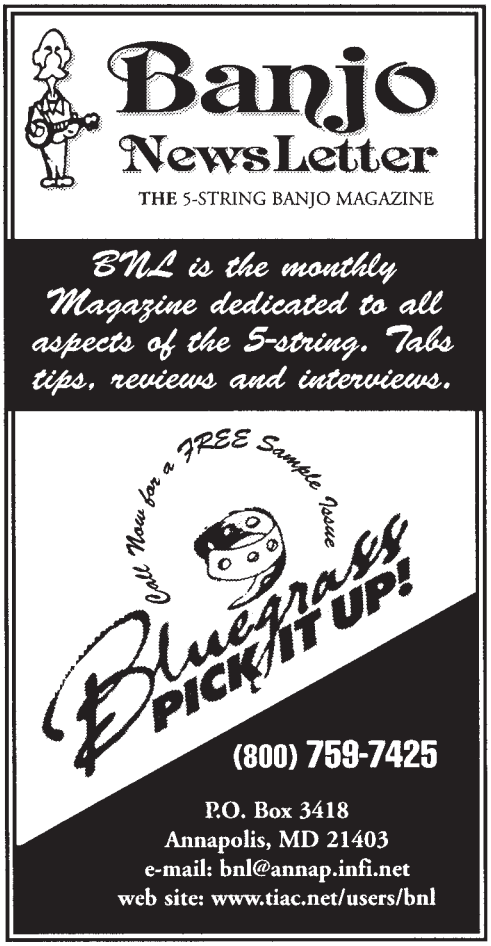
The result has been well worth the wait. Volume 1 (*What Would You Give in Exchange for Your Soul*) appeared in 2000; volume 2 (*Just a Song of Old Kentucky*) appeared earlier this year. Each CD contains 15 cuts (about 40 minutes of music). Whenever possible, Rounder used the original recordings or the cleanest 78 available. That effort marks the greatest difference from the LPs, where scratches, needle drag, and even audible warping marred several cuts. These CDs restore the original clarity, and are even a little scary: it's easy to imagine you're hearing these for the first time, just as they may have been recorded in Charlotte in the 30s.

Finally, Charles K. Wolfe's CD booklet notes are icing on the musical cake. Wolfe (a musical scholar of significant reputation) provides brief but pertinent details about each tune, the recording sessions, and even the song's authors. For bluegrass students, each booklet is a mini-course in itself.

As one of the most influential brother teams, Bill and Charlie Monroe set the bar for other notable duos (like the Delmore Brothers and the Blue Sky Boys) as well as for much of the "country" music at that time and what was to follow. If you're not already familiar with the work of the Monroe Brothers, this CD set can rectify that problem. Pick up volumes 1 and 2 and watch out for volume 3 in 2002.

Song list: Roll in My Sweet Baby's Arms, Don't Forget Me, My Savior's Train, Just a Song of Old Kentucky, The Old Cross Road, I'm Going [Through], Darlin Corey, Six Months Ain't Long, The Saints Go Marching In, We Read of a Place That's Called Heaven, The Forgotten Soldier Boy, I Am Thinking Tonight of the Old Folks, [I] Dreamed I Searched Heaven For You, Where Is My Sailor Boy?, Will the Circle Be Unbroken.

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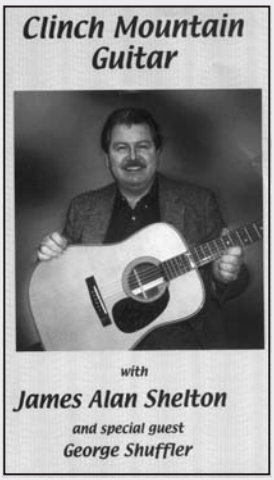

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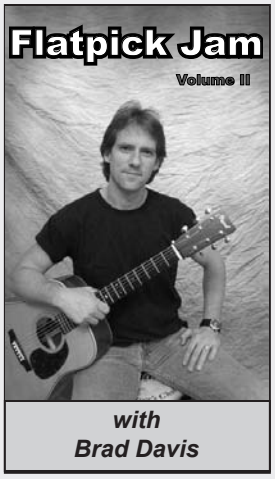

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Then I met this guy at the festival in Bean Blossom. We were doing a little shade-tree picking, and he was singing wonderfully. When we finished "Will the Circle Be Unbroken," he asked me why I didn't join in on harmony.

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"But you could sing harmony a little, so you could learn quicker--"

"nope! I sang harmonhy like a bullfrog in heat, too!"

We laughed, and he left me with a cheerful, "Try those tapes out."

Well, I played that course all the way home in my car, and I sang til I was hoarse. I sure felt like I was learning... but the real test was yet to come.

Next Tuesday I met with my pickin" buddies, like I always do. Just before we started "Fox On The Run," I told my friends I was going to sing harmonhy. They all laughed (I knew they would), and Charlie cracked, "What kind of harmony? Froggy tenor?"

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They kept giggling, but you should've seen their faces when I started singing harmony. They were amazed. Charlie even accused me of getting 'harmony surgery' instead of going to Bean Blossom. Naturally, they all wanted to learn mhy secret. I just smiled, and said "Harmony singing is a skill as much as a gift. And this course got me working mhy skill the right way."

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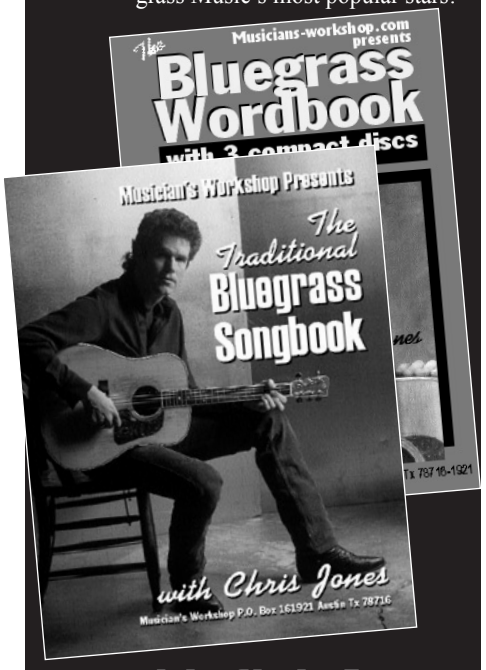

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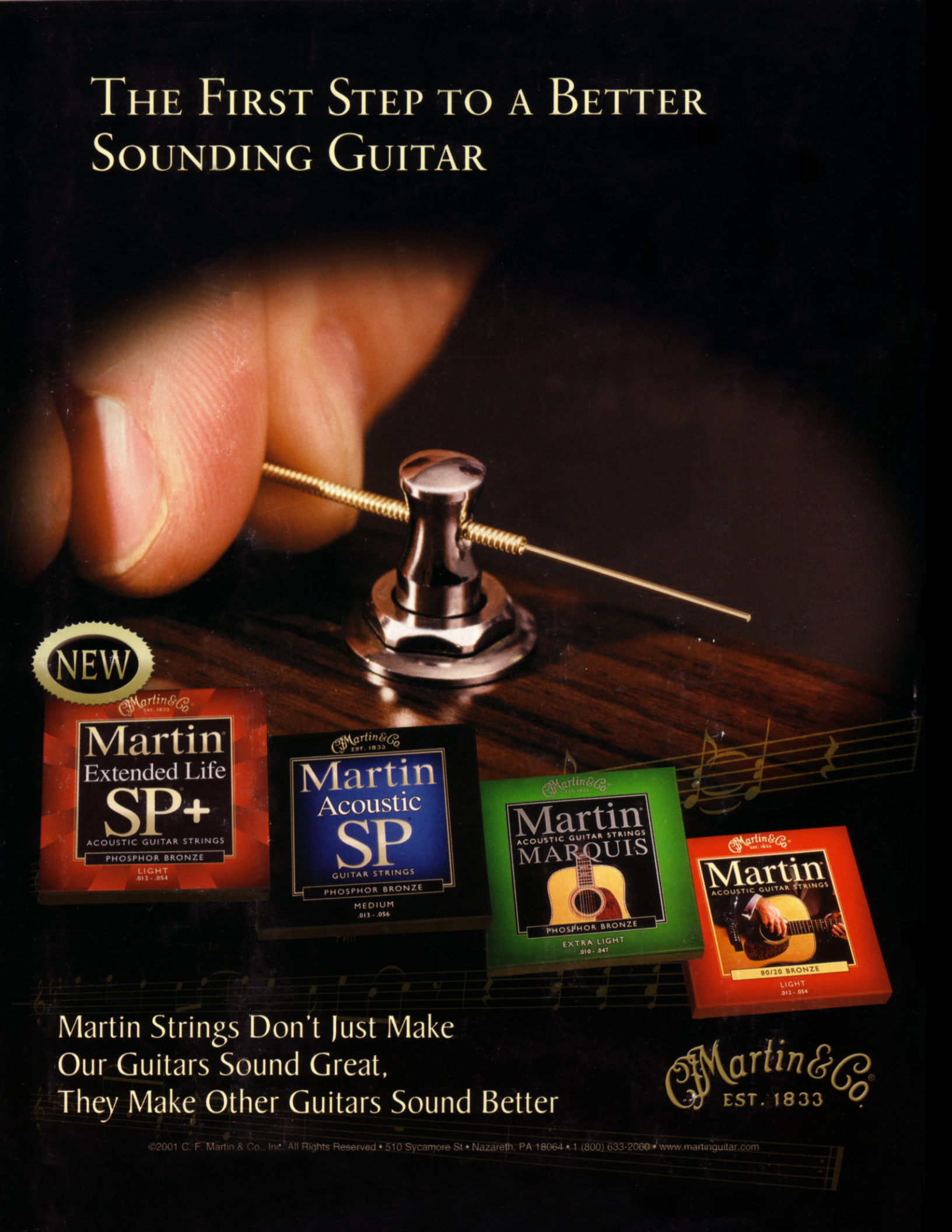

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